

Prologue: All Blue Skies

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Harry Potter found himself looking down a familiar length of Holly, one he knew to be exactly eleven inches in length, and contained a single feather once belonging to a Phoenix named Fawkes. Things really could have been going better, but then again, this was pretty standard as far as his life went, par for the course and all that jazz. What was being tied to a chair with his own Ollivander wand pointed at him, when stacked up to all the other enjoyable goings on that had happened over the past few years, hell the whole of his life?

This all started when Harry was a baby, fifteen months old, when a man came to kill him. No, that's too far back, so it's best to just give the short version. He found out he was a wizard, made two good friends, took down a troll, rescued a dragon, killed his Defence Professor, flew a car into an animated tree, battled a swarm of Acromantula, and at the end of his second year went to the rescue of his friends younger sister.

There, we are more or less up to date on things which are important.

He went to rescue his friend's younger sister. Not that he knew the girl very well you understand, if asked Harry would find himself hard pressed to pin down a single conversation he'd had with her, but from comments made he'd come to the conclusion that she was... sweet. You know the type, all freckles and shy smiles, would do no harm to anyone.

Nevertheless she was a friend's sister, so in the finest traditions of storytelling everywhere he went on one of those classic princess rescues. There was a creepy dungeon, a scary monster, and a damsel in distress. Not to mention the magical sword. So he grabbed the sword, shouted 'Aaaarg!' and ended up slaying the beast; it was a large venomous snake known as a Basilisk, which could kill with a single glance, dead away just as lethal as the famous green light.

Given that Harry was only twelve at the time, you can see how this might have been a little tough, so he blacked out once the threat was taken care of. Coming to Harry noticed that the young girl with the freckles and shy smiles was gone, the beast was still dead, and

the only thing left besides the magical sword was a small book, which he took with him and made his way back to civilisation.

Things went downhill for the twelve year old Harry Potter, as an evil wizard of aristocratic bearing was among the authority figures he sought out. The man denounced him for dispatching the young girl and being in possession of such an obviously evil object. For the small book was once created by a far more evil wizard long ago, one who was, like Harry, in possession of a magical trait which allows the user to converse with serpents.

Proclaim his innocence any way he would Harry was not believed, and even the words of the aged and wise headmaster are overruled, leaving Harry alone without the aid of his friends or allies. Under the guise of public safety he was locked away where he could do no harm, to the castle fortress of Azkaban. No you may ask, he was but a child, and this was so. It was for this reason he was placed in the minimum security section, far from those nightmarish creatures of cloak and withered flesh.

Between two others he was placed, two who would eventually become friends, who had known him his whole life, one by reputation, and one by blood. The man was an evil mass murderer and an old friend of his parents, the woman a feared dark witch who was every bit as insane. Yet with no other company they talked and they played, they taught many things, for you see Harry was quite popular in his castle prison.

Harry learned in the early days that when the foul creatures came close he was made to see all the worst things in life, feel like there was nothing worth living for, and that no hope was there to be had. He discovers through luck that if he forced happiness through his magic, a wonderful mist would overcome him and his friends. The bad things were still there, of that you can not doubt, but with the mist they could touch him only a little.

So they talked and laughed and played many games. Harry learned the evil wizard of aristocratic bearing had many stories both funny and embarrassing which the woman could enlighten him too, and the man could reveal the past of his parents, misdeeds and adventures which keep him laughing and fascinated.

Long days turned to weeks, and months were passed in this way, until the aged wise headmaster came and took Harry away, and with his new learned stories the man too was freed. For you see the real traitor was not him but a rat. A rat masquerading as a man who was shaped like a rat. It was quite confusing but it worked, and the rat was put in the castle in place of the man, and the man was set free in place of the rat, the rat who was shaped like a man. So now free of the creatures and castle Azkaban, the man and the boy spent time in the house of his old evil family, the boy alone feeling sorrow for leaving his other friend there to suffer.

A few weeks more and Harry would be back where it stated, the castle of his school, and his old abandoned friends. Now fourth year was coming and Harry Potter had changed.

Harry Potter had changed, but the world was the same.

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Lens of Sanity

You've read it a million times, Harry goes to Azkaban, meets Sirius and Bellatrix, comes out different, and the story goes from there. I got it all out of the way before even the first chapter, so that we can get on with the parts of the story you might not have seen (any)(every)where else. The style will change to standard third person from here on out.

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I need to give you a warning; I've had some grammar and tense problems due to ignorance on my part. Thanks to a helpful reviewer named Mr. Oz I now know what I've been doing wrong, so from ChapSix onwards it should be okay. I'll go through and repair soon.

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An Old and New World
by Lens of Sanity

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Chapter One: Freedom and Other Boring Things

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"Sirius we need to get her out of there!" The two of them were searching through the wreckage of the once imposing #12 Grimmauld Place for as many spare wands as they could find.

"I've told you before Harry, she's evil, pure evil. Why won't you listen to me?" Sirius Black still looked like death warmed over, barely warmed over at that, he'd been in Azkaban prison for about a third of his life, circumstances like that don't do good things to a person.

Harry rolled his eyes "And I've told you a million times, that's what everyone said about you!" He paused to think a moment "And me come to think of it. You should not be so quick to judge people Sirius."

Following a second attack from a swarm of pissed off Doxies they decided that they had found all the wands they were going to "It is not the same, you and I were actually innocent. She isn't innocent. Not at all, she even admitted guilt at her trial for Merlin's sake."

"So did you when they arrested you." Harry reminded him as he placed the eight wands on a table in the front room.

Placing the dozen he'd found Sirius let out a frustrated "Aarg!" and looked down at what they had managed to scrounge together. Twenty was not bad at all, way more than he was expecting at any rate. "It's not the same, I was feeling guilty for your parents-, bah, I've explained this fifty times already, it's just not the same at all."

Rolling his eyes Harry started going through the wands one by one, stacking the friendly ones in one pile and the hostile ones in another. "I wish I could just go to Ollivanders."

Seizing hold of a change in topic the dog animagus jumped in with "Yeah, I know, but it was one of the things Albus had to give up in order to get you out, I'll be heading there soon to get a new wand, but you can't until you become of age, sorry. I suppose we could try one of the stores down Knockturn Alley but I'd bet anything that

Lucius has already made sure you can't get one from there either, he sure worked hard enough to keep you wandless and out of Hogwarts."

"Are you sure my wand was really gone, couldn't someone have taken it when I was unconscious or something?" The friendly pile held only four, not much to choose from, and none of them came close to his old phoenix wand.

Sirius thought about it even though the question had been asked a thousand times "I don't see how, it just wasn't anywhere when they looked for it. You'll just have to make do with one of those, at least for now." Sirius watched as Harry decided on a fairly standard pale stick about a foot long.

"This one is the best, do you know anything about it?"

"That was my Grandfather Pollux Black's wand, Elm and Dragon Heartstring. From a Horntail if I remember, he used to boast about it when he was deep into his wine, and about how he used it to earn his Order of Merlin."

Harry nodded at this and, knowing he can't be tracked by the Ministry under the wards of the House of Black, did a simple measuring charm learned from Professor Flitwick in second year "Twelve and a quarter inches. Elm you said?" he nodded "Yeah, it's not as good as my old one but it's not that bad either." Harry lost himself in thought for a moment, before he snapped back to awareness. "So how are we going to get her out of there Sirius?"

He just groaned.

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Finishing off some kind of boiled sausage which Harry had decided never to eat again in his life -seriously Azkaban food was tastier and probably more nutritious- he reluctantly changed the subject and asked "Are you going to teach me that totally impressive piece of magic you've been blathering on about for months or what?" He'd finally shelved the discussion of getting his friend out of prison, for now at least.

"The Patronus, yeah we'll do it now, it won't take long saying as you know the hard part anyway." Sirius had been amazed when Harry first produced a Patronus Mist, as he'd done it without a wand, no wand for Merlin's sake, if he had not felt the effects with his own senses he'd have said that it was impossible. "Follow these wand motions, but don't do anything until I say you've got it exactly right."

For the next fifteen minutes Harry obliged, refraining from making any sarcastic comments, until he was up to his instructor's needlessly high standards. "So, now what?" He said irritably.

"Describe how you produce the mist." Describe it for the hundredth time he meant.

"You just come up with the happiest feeling you can, and then kind of force it out into the universe. Simply make it happen, I don't know, I don't really think about it, I just do it."

Sirius got the same look he always did at this explanation but eventually conceded. "On the last 'brandishing' motion, force that feeling through your wand and out of the tip, easy." Harry locked eyes with him for the longest time, eventually he just sighed and got on with it.

"Expecto Patronum"

The familiar silvery mist coalesced into the well defined shape of a powerful and majestic animal. Harry got up from where he was lounging and peered closely at it, ignoring his companion's startled expression. 'It's not like it was any harder with a wand, I don't get why he's so surprised.'

"You know Padfoot, I think you're right, this is kind of cool. Flashy magic, like what you'd use when you want to be all impressive at people" The green eyed boy said this watching the construct pad powerfully about the room with intelligence as it sought out threats. Eventually he lets the silvery image dissolve. "What do you want to do now? ...Well?"

"I guess I shouldn't be surprised you got it first time..." Though for some reason he clearly was surprised "...do today? Whatever you want, you're going back to Hogwarts in a few days do you think you're ready?"

"No idea, should I not be in my third year though? I don't see why they'd advance me when I didn't do a single third year class."

"That was Albus again, I think he wants you in the same class as your old friends" Harry's face twisted at that.

'Who the hell cares? It's not like they matter anymore, where were they when I was in Azkaban, safe and sound that's where, good luck to them and good riddance. Hermione is alive, fine, that's all I wanted to know. With today's paper once again proclaiming me released on a technicality, and that I'm a dangerous threat to society I can just see how much fun my school chums are going to be. I'm the intimidating, blood splattered Heir of Slytherin remember; fear me bwahahahaha. Maybe I should get robes with Dark Lord stencilled on the back, really play up my evil side.'

"Whatever Padfoot, how about you teach me some wandwork so I'm not as rusty when I get there, there's no doubt I'll have to defend myself from pretty much everyone at one point or another this year."

Picking up one of the spare wands he started on Precision Casting, showing the recently turned fourteen year old a simple shield to start "Remember focus on accurate motions, and make them as tiny as possible so your opponent can't easily tell what you're casting."

They spent most of the day this way, it was not all that different from prison really.

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A smile broke across Harry's face as a well known snowy owl swooped into the kitchen, -the grumbling house-elf was kicked out quite tersely earlier- and attached to her talons was a parchment which was etched in a precise hand.

"Hey Hedwig, did you miss me as much as I missed you?" he asked throwing the unopened letter into the Victorian style oven.

She nibbled his ear affectionately for a long while as he stroked her feathers gently, with all the love in the world. The animagus walked in on this scene and stood there looking strangely at them for a few

seconds before blurting "We should get your school supplies today Harry."

"I honestly can't be bothered, get the elf to do it." Sirius just looked at the kid like he was crazy. "...yeah, that's probably a bad idea now I say it out loud." 'Everything would come back covered in dirt or something, no, muggle blood. Absolutely everything would be soaked in the life's blood of a thousand muggles if that mental elf had his way.'

"Get ready right now, I might even buy you a broom once we're done."

"Don't bother, I got most of my stuff back so I still have my Nimbus 2000, y'know I'm pretty sure Professor McGonagall had a lot more to do with my getting that broom than she let on." He said returning with a cloak.

"Probably, she was always nuts about Griffindor winning the Cup when I went to Hogwarts." They floo to the Leaky Cauldron and Harry fell flat on his arse much to the amusement of the older man.

"Laugh it up, I'm the only one with a wand remember." He tried for an intimidating glare but it failed utterly. "Screw it, go to Ollivander's on your own I'll sort myself out, I could use a break from all of your annoying cheerfulness."

Other than the occasionally fearful looks thrown at him Harry got his shopping done with very little drama. That was until he'd just finished paying for all the books on this year's list and as he was about to exit Flourish & Blotts, he heard the easily recognisable twang of the junior Malfoy interrupting his musings "Well if it isn't-,"

Fist slamming into the side of the blonde's neck and a hand roughly taking hold of his collar, Draco Malfoy's doubtlessly callous comment was cut short. With what was sure to be a surprised look gracing his face, Draco found himself unceremoniously tossed through the plate glass window, and out into the middle of Diagon Alley.

Spying his godfather Harry carelessly pushed past the boy's two stupefied bodyguards and simply stated "All done here, ready to head home?" as he stepped over the groaning teenager.

Sirius looked at the scene and obviously comes to the conclusion that its funny as hell because he said nothing, instead taking the broken glass and lacerated boy in stride "Sounds good to me, I was going to stop for lunch at the Cauldron but now I've kind of lost my appetite."

"I'll cook this time, you're terrible at it, and I'm sure the elf is trying to accidentally poison us... Hmm, can you eat house-elf Sirius? That would kill two birds with one stone." They chatted on about nothing really and slowly made their way back to the floo.

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The day of September the First dawned as it did every year, bright eyed children eager to get on with the new year's learning, -or not learning depending on the student- at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry rolled over and abruptly fell back to sleep. Eventually he was awoken again at five to ten and commanded to shower and be ready to Side-Along to the Express.

"Why don't we just crack to Hogsmeade, that way I don't have to spend seven friggin' hours on a train full of schoolsheep."

"Stop your bitching Harry and get ready, I'll see you this weekend if you can find that secret entrance I told you about. Oh, and remember to get a Prophet today, you'll like the headline." Harry Potter was a very typical teenage schoolchild in that he really didn't want to go to school following his summer holidays, though the reasons he didn't want to go back to school were slightly more peculiar.

Harry was famous, world renowned even, known the world over for the deeds of his youth. The next Dark Lord, people cower in fear at the mere mention of his name, did you know he once defeated the most powerful dark wizard in history, when he was a baby? A baby for goodness sake, he must have the power to turn continents to dust, and scatter the armies of all those opposing him with nothing but the wave of his hand.

Bah.

Two years ago, he was a hero, a vaunted world saviour type, the kind of child who you hope will grow up to marry your daughter.

Then it's bam; who murdered and then ate a fellow student, and oh look, who offed poor stuttering Quirrelmort. Prison and then hatred.

Finishing the shower and brushing his teeth Harry decided that there had to be a better way of cleaning ones teeth than a fool muggle toothbrush, and once downstairs he asked as much to his godfather "Yeah, the Incantation is 'Integrum Restituere' but I don't know the wand motions so just overpower it until it works."

"Did you not say that the wandmotion was important for efficiency and power spell casting?" He asked catching the older man out on his ridiculous and contradictory advice.

"You're not going to be brushing your teeth in a duel, just do it and stop whinging." Sticking the Horntail wand in his mouth he tried it and found it surprisingly effective. Hmm. "Shrink your gear and let's get you out of here, the Hogwarts Express leaves in less than ten minutes."

He grumpily obeyed, and a quarter of an hour later Harry was unable to find an empty compartment. Spying one with a single third year, and three second years one of whom was likely the brother of the older, he crashed open the door glaring with as much malevolence as his fourteen year old frame could manage "What are you all doing in my compartment..." he growled in a tone he hoped was menacing. "...Get the hell out of here, and is that a Prophet. I'll take that too." The onetime saviour commanded obedience, finger pointed at the door.

They predictably scuttled out and he placed the locking spell 'Colloportus' he'd learned a while back, and a privacy charm Sirius had said was invented by Snape of all people 'Muffliato,' then set about studiously ignoring anything that was happening out in the hall.

Dark Lord Potter Senselessly Attacks Innocent Schoolboy
by Rita Skeeter

'Oh this is going to be a winner, thanks a bunch Padfoot, really a good way to cheer me up at the start of term. I wish Bella was here, she's always on my side.'

Once he got through the article, which was about how a brave Draco Malfoy had nobly stood up to a deranged lunatic and somehow

chased him off with only minor injuries, he caught a bushy-haired brunette in his peripheral vision. She was hammering on the door, but the privacy ward was keeping it silent and he could pretend not to notice as he turned to gaze out of the window.

She didn't go away for over an hour.

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It was considerably more difficult to ignore his one time friend at the feast saying as she sat disturbingly close, but in a brilliant flash of foresight Harry had hit her with a 'Muffliato' before she got close, so all he could hear when she made any noise was a kind of unidentified buzzing.

Other than the occasional shake, and the oh-so-familiar looks of fear pointed in his direction, Harry found the feast surprisingly good. The food for one was the best he'd had since, well being at Hogwarts at the end of his second year.

Madam Pomfrey, Hogwarts school nurse and Headmaster Dumbledore's private physician, had been giving nutrient and stabilising potions to both Sirius and Harry since they got out of Azkaban, and he found himself enjoying one with his meal. The nutrient potions were actually quite tasty, an oddity as most potions seemed to taste like they'd been brewed in a running sock. Harry had made sure to learn a glamour which would make what he was drinking appear the same colour and consistency as human blood, but that in no way contributed to the looks of fear on the students faces.

Listening to the old man's announcement Harry found himself interested in this upcoming tournament, even if he was disappointed that there would be no Quidditch this year. It had been far too long since he had last flown.

Then a horrible thought occurred to him. "Bloody fucking hell, I'm going to be forced into this damn thing aren't I!" It was not a question. This world did not exist so that Harry Potter could simply sit back and watch a horrendously dangerous Tournament such as was described without somehow having to be in it.

Later that night, through the charmed mirrors, Sirius Black reluctantly agreed with this assessment.

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Sirius had yelled at the Headmaster many times in the weeks between the welcoming feast and Halloween, each time met with assurances that there was no danger, cementing in both their minds that this whole thing was simply going to be inevitable.

Harry was forced to step up from simply ignoring the silent brunette, to ignoring her and also hitting her regularly with a Stinging Hex. She was for some reason very persistent. The redhead Harry once thought of as a friend was much more peaceable, saying as how he had given up after his first attempt.

Over the past two months Harry had become much more accomplished at sneaking about, he had spent time with his godfather regularly, and knew his way around the Restricted Section probably as well as any save the Librarian herself. The two newly released prisoners were taking no chances, people were trying to kill them and the sensible thing to do is to be vigilant.

In the words of Harry's new, and most hated Professor 'Constant Vigilance.' Honestly the axe crazy sociopath seemed to take these Dark Lord rumours ten times more seriously than even the most paranoid of the sheep. Harry throwing off his Imperius Curse like it was nothing probably did him more harm than good in that respect.

"Still, being immune to the Imperius for life is worth being turned into a ferret for twenty seconds, fucking Malfoy he started it, how is it my fault if I was forced to be the one who ended it?" He muttered under his breath.

"Did you say something Harry?" The bushy haired fifteen year old asked in a tone which was approaching zealous levels.

Harry ignored her with a practiced ease, instead focusing on the hopefuls in the hall. He ignored the Hogwarts students for the obvious reason, it was clear to him now that none of them can possibly be chosen. There were only three slots in the Triwizard Tournament and as he was in Hogwarts robes, this meant it was

only down to the Durmstrang and Beauxbaton students who could conceivably be picked by this Goblet of Fire.

There were a few in Durmstrang robes who might get a crack at it, there was a student named Athena Manos who Sirius mentioned was probably the granddaughter to some big nuts Greek gangster/politician, and on further investigation turned out to be a shoe in for the Duelling Circuit next season.

Victor Krum was a big name too, he was in the World Cup which was apparently held in England this year, he caught the Snitch and won Bulgaria the Title. From the sounds of it he was the only player on their team too, so that meant that even though Bulgaria only won by twenty points, it was Krum alone who did it.

It was hard to say much about the French contingent, not because they were incompetent or anything, just that they had this Veela girl sitting in the middle of their group, and it's laughably pathetic how everyone was fawning over her meagre little aura. Harry really hoped that someone other than her get's chosen, even though he couldn't come up with anything about the other classmates, he just really didn't want to have to deal with a conceited bitch.

"Representing Durmstrang; Victor Krum." There were cheers, and Harry clapped along uncharacteristically, he wanted to see how Krum does off a broom as much as they all do.

"Representing Hogwarts;..." Here it comes 'Harry Potter,' yes, yes, we all know by now I'm in this, just get on with it. "...Angelina Johnson."

'WHAT? Oh thank the fucking gods for that one. I'm just paranoid, I'll take just being paranoid over having to get killed in this fool contest. "Representing Beauxbatons; Fleur Delacour" He clapped exactly as enthusiastically as the other aura-addled morons, it was so worth it. 'I'll take an annoying champion in the face of such good news.'

Yeah, Harry wasn't happy about what happened next.

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Chapter Two: Fight for Your Supper

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Stomping into the reception area Harry completely ignored everybody and slumped to the floor, lounging insolently against a wall. Eventually Albus and the other Heads of School whisked their way into the room "We fucking told you this would happen!" he exploded before anyone could say a word "Do not worry yourself overmuch Harry, we have taken the utmost caution to prevent those underage from being entered into the contest. Does that ring any fucking bells you crazy old bastard!"

Harry didn't even bother getting up off the floor when he said this, and the Headmaster eventually voiced a comment "I take it you did not in fact enter yourself in the tournament?" Not even dignifying this with a response he simply folded his hands across his stomach to prevent them going for his wand, and then let the room go about their bickering.

Who would have guessed, it was a magically binding contract which Harry had to honour, even if he was not the one who entered himself. It was at times like this that he wistfully thought about actually going evil and taking over the world, if he were Britain's evil overlord then people would have to enter themselves into magically binding contracts, it would be illegal to enter other people. That would be his first change to the established order come the Day.

Eventually Harry found himself pushing his way through Gryffindor common room, and was once more forced to hex Hermione as he made his way up to his dormitory. Throwing up all of the basic security spells he knew around his bed Harry was pleased about only one thing, he'd managed to land a fairly slamming comment on the French girl regarding her crappy accent. He fell asleep with an uncharacteristic smile gracing his face.

"Petrificus Totalus, Mobilicorpus"

'And I was having such a nice morning too.' Harry was on his way back from breakfast when an all too recognizable voice petrified him and began levitating him into an empty classroom. "I am sick of you constantly hexing me Harry, we are going to talk, and you are going to listen." Harry wondered briefly how he was meant to talk when all

he could move was his eyes, but this thought was distant and seemed unimportant.

She took his murderous glare as an urging to continue "I have no idea what happened, all I remember was coming back from the library and seeing the yellow eyes of the Basilisk in Penelope Clearwater's hand mirror. Then I wake up, you are in Azkaban, Ginny Weasley is supposedly dead, and they won't let me even visit you. Then you come back to school and won't talk to anyone..." She seemed like she was on the verge of tears "...and I try to talk to you but you ignore me, and you keep hexing me. What's the problem Harry?"

The brunette released the petrification and he just sat there quietly for a while. "What do you want Hermione, you are alive and free, what do you want from me?" These were pretty much the first words Harry had spoken to any student since beginning the term, and the muggleborn girl found herself at a loss as to what to say.

Noting she had nothing Harry turned to leave "I thought we were friends." she wailed desperately.

"What did you do last year Hermione?" She just looked at him "You were here at school, like a normal kid sitting her lessons. I was sandwiched between two lunatics and forced to spend an inordinate amount of time in the company of Dementors. I do not want to talk to any of you little students, I just do not care anymore."

As he reached the door she injected "You need help in this tournament, I don't believe for one minute you entered yourself no matter what Angelina's friends have been saying."

"Huh, yeah great sure I need help Hermione. You got any ideas?"

Surprisingly she instantly answered "Yes, I do have one."

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Three hours later Harry woke in the Hospital wing "Urg, what the hell happened" he muttered groggily as the memories crashed back. 'Okay, so I was kidnapped by Hermione, and she came up with a really good idea to help me in the tournament, then I went to Potions.

Oh, that's right, stupid friggin' potions professor trying to dig around in my head.'

When you're surrounded by fear inducing soul suckers around the clock you need as many ways to take the edge off as possible, and try as he might Harry couldn't feasibly keep up the Patronus Mist all day every day. So his friend Bellatrix taught him some of the basics to an obscure branch of magic known as Occlumency. A branch used for shielding one's mind as well as the controlling of all thoughts and emotions. Funnily enough it was Lucius Malfoy's insistence that Harry already had this skill which allowed him to prevent the use of Veritaserum in an interrogation. Apparently a Master Occlumens can pointedly not know the truth when questioned, thereby making the truth serum useless against a skilled practitioner.

So when ugly greasy potions master tried poking around in his mind, Harry knew enough to figure out exactly what was happening. A 'Levicorpus' and a 'Pello,' had the pathetic little man lifted into the air by his ankle and Banished, flying him directly into his potion cupboard, incidentally covering him in an array of different cocktails.

He was less than pleased and there was a bit of an impromptu duel, one which Harry lost very quickly and very badly, with him ending up here in the Hospital Wing. "I strongly dislike that man" he flatly stated to himself.

Madam Pomfrey heard him and bustled over muttering imprecations under her breath as she gave the black haired boy the once over. Headmaster Dumbledore was in the room looking all benign and grandfatherly by the time she finished. "He attacked me with class three dark magic, I was defending myself." He fired off an explanation before the old man could comment. Striking first, it was worth a shot.

Dumbledore paused, taking the time to change his tactic "Indeed, our esteemed Potions Master was far from thrilled regarding what he called an 'unprovoked attack,' and after some further questioning I found myself intrigued as to how you came to understand the art of Occlumency."

"Bella taught me a little, it helps with Dementors, not much but something is better than nothing. I didn't know Snape went around

using Legilimency of schoolchildren though, so I'm going to have to learn the more advanced stuff on top of any preparation I'm going to have to do for this stupid competition."

He pondered the boy's words for some time, unsure about hearing confirmation of Sirius Black's concerns regarding Harry's relationship with Mrs. LeStrange. "You cannot go around attacking Professors without reprimand Harry, you will have to serve a public detention for no other reason than to prevent others from mimicking your example."

"I just told you it was in self defence. I won't be punished for your man's actions and I am fully prepared to go to the MLE if necessary." He met the old man's eyes hoping to convey the truth of his statement. Harry knew they probably wouldn't listen to a budding Dark Lord's concerns, and wanted to make clear that he would raise a stink doing it anyway. "Did you know he was using Dark Arts on minors?"

The Headmaster took a deep breath but did not respond, so Harry changed the topic "I talked to Hermione earlier. You gave her a device she called a Time-Turner so she could throw herself into her studies last year, I would like you to get me one so I can prepare for the upcoming competition."

The wheels were clearly turning in his head and he responded with "What would you do with such a device?" though Harry would bet good money that he had figured it out already.

"I want to go on thirty hour days, I'll rope Sirius into helping. Probably hack off my useless classes as well so I have more time to train. You know as well as I do that this whole thing is an elaborate attempt to kill me in some spectacular fashion, I would like to be as prepared as I can possibly be."

"Doing such a thing will age you prematurely..." He trailed off at the look on the younger's face, one which stated clearly that actually living long enough for that to become a problem was unlikely in the extreme "...I will think on your request, Harry."

As they part ways each were well aware that the concerns of neither had been dealt with during their discussion.

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Heading for the seventh floor and what Padfoot called the Come and Go Room which the Marauders had discovered some time during their sixth year, Harry passed two of the Slytherin girls who were in his year. They give him a look which he failed to recognise and he passed by them pushing the confusion from his mind.

Dumbledore had come through with a Time-Turner because the magic on the Goblet of Fire rendered him unable to aid his school's Champion, and he decided that if Harry was to be on his own for the remainder of the year, then he would give him what little help he could.

'I guess that means I really am a Hogwarts Champion even if there was no school name on the slip of Defence homework which found its way into the Goblet.' Harry mused to himself as he entered the never before seen room.

"Tarantallegra" a voice bellowed before the door was even closed, forcing Harry to clumsily roll to the side to avoid the dancing jinx.

They traded shots for about twenty seconds before Harry was trussed up like a pig in conjured ropes. Really, he only had two years of formal training, none of which was from competent instructors, so even lasting that long was an accomplishment.

Sirius of course did not seem to agree with that assessment. "Crap. I knew you'd be crap, but not this crap. Here I thought you'd be half decent with the rate you pick up new spells, but basically everything you did there was just wrong, wrong, wrong."

It had been a little under a week since the meeting in the Hospital Wing with the Headmaster, and this was the first opportunity to get any work done. It was happening during one of those useless History of Magic lessons everybody sleeps through, meaning that he may in fact learn something unlike the rest of his classmates.

After an eternity Sirius let the boy down and was greeted with a long series of expletives "You tried to shoot me in the back right when I came through the door, I'm amazed I lasted even that long."

"You were crap. We'll focus on footwork, and keeping your casting efficient even when you're diving around. Once you've got that to a decent level we can go back to learning new spells. How long do you plan to spend using the Time-Turner?"

"The rest of the year unless I have a good reason not to, I want to get stronger as fast as possible and the school's Healer says that I should get used to a different sleeping pattern in about a month."

"Well we have two weeks until the First Task, and I've been told by Albus that Charley Weasley is in the country, and that the man is a Dragon Handler by trade. Do you think there may be a hint in there somewhere?" Harry just huffed a small laugh about rules bending and opened his initial salvo at the animagus.

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Six hours and an Invigoration Draught later the two were kicked back on chairs provided by the reopened room. "I've been getting some strange looks ever since I took a crack at Snape."

"I'll bet, but how is that different from the way people normally look at you?" Sirius found the result of the various potions that were dumped on his childhood rival hilarious. Half his hair was missing - which he later shaved off completely- and a large patch of his face was dyed neon orange for three days, all that was after he'd been cleaned up. What he was like before he'd been cleaned up was truly worth seeing.

"It's not the normal 'oh no a Dark Lord is going to kill us all' look, I passed a couple of Slytherins on the way here and I don't know what it was. It wasn't the kind of look I've ever really seen before."

Sirius looked a little amused and lightly asked "Would these two Slytherins happen to be of the female variety?"

"...Yeah, so?" Harry responded frowning.

"So..." the man prompted, finally giving it up as a bad job "So, you ignorant schoolboy, you are a badass school champion who may or may not be evil, and can get away with hexing his professors if they annoy you without punishment. Or at least that's what it looks like

from their perspective, you also have the dashing ex-con thing going for you."

Harry just didn't get it and confusedly asked "What are you getting at Sirius?"

"Merlin where have you been living all your life, you should be able to figure this one out on your own."

"Prison. I've been living in Prison my whole life, spell it out before I curse you."

"Like you could land one little boy," he muttered as he easily palmed away the stray curse using a duellist shield "Some of the girls in this castle are bound to find you fascinating kid. Hell you had them with the whole 'may or may not be evil' thing, but with being a champion and all the rest I'm amazed you haven't been spiked with Amortentia yet."

Putting most of that on hold for a moment he asked a more or less irrelevant question "That's a love potion isn't it? Can you tell me what it tastes like?"

Knitting his brows Sirius replied "It tastes like all your favourite things. One of Alice's friends nailed me with some when I was in seventh year. It supposedly changes depending on the drinker... why?"

"I was wondering why my drink tasted so delicious yesterday morning, can we buy some more I really liked it."

"Are you saying you're immune to Amortentia?" he blurted in disbelief. "Wait, you liked the taste and want to buy more?"

"I don't know about immune, but I had this lovely tasting beverage with my breakfast yesterday and I was thinking fond thoughts about one of the fifth years whose name I don't even know. I didn't fall in love with her or anything and I'd gotten over it by the time it came for me to be tortured by that Moody asshole."

He thought on this for a while before putting it out of his mind "You should get yourself a girlfriend, just pick one who seems interested and be mysterious at her. It'll give you something to do when you're not training."

"As if I don't have enough on my plate at the moment." Although he briefly thought he might take a crack at 'the Veela bitch' for no other reason than ignoring her aura appeared to annoy her immensely. "I think those two Slytherins were called Tracy and Daphne."

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It was actually just as simple as Padfoot had said, so Harry found himself accompanied on the first Hogsmeade visit by a tall attractive blonde and her shorter but equally attractive dark haired best friend. It was four days before the first task and Harry was taking the whole day off to relax and try to enjoy life.

He was also doing his level best to follow his godfather's advice; 'remember Harry, half your comments should imply you are evil, the other half that you're good. Give a backhanded compliment when the opportunity arises, but don't be scared to make fun of them a little.' He gave many more recommendations but like most of the things Sirius says it was all contradictory. He also was surprisingly knowledgeable about taking two girls out at the same time, which Harry did not take to be a good sign for some reason.

"I really cannot believe Rita Skeeter would write such things about you." During the wand weighing ceremony Harry had been introduced to a reporter, who for some perverse, probably masochistic reason, Harry found he quite liked. The woman was clearly a poisonous bitch who didn't care about anything save making her story as sensational as possible. It was also obvious that the woman was not even attempting to hide who she is, being straightforward about her goals, albeit in a twisted kind of way.

"I may have intentionally given her a few quotes which she could blow out of all proportion." He replied to the dark haired girls comment.

She looked confused by this revelation "Intentionally? Why would you do that, she made you out to be the kind of person who, while possibly dashing and clearly mysterious, eats babies in the dead of night."

"I liked how she'd managed to bring in Pollux Black, and how his Order of Merlin was for assassinating one of the minister at the

time's enemies. A story which I know for a fact to be a total fabrication because he was awarded the thing for donating a huge pile of gold. Yet she did it, and managed to strongly imply that my using the same wand means I'll doubtlessly follow in his nefarious footsteps"

Walking into the Three Broomsticks in the waning sunlight Harry managed to body-check one of the leaving French girl's friends, which caused her to in turn bump the Veela, who promptly pratfalls into the mud. A comment not quite under his breath regarding her 'gracefulness' would have likely been responded to with violence had he not hastily slipped into the building.

"You're soevil Harry." Said the blonde, not quite chastisingly.

"I have no idea what you are talking about." He waved dismissively "Wine? I've been told the house Red is surprisingly good." Another thing Sirius mentioned, these two are teenagers, they have just as much of an idea of what makes a good wine as he did, and being able to pull off ordering alcohol when underage would doubtlessly get him bonus points too.

When he met up with his godfather later that evening he simply voiced the one irrefutable sentiment he had learned that day "Threeway kisses are awesome."

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"Pupugi" slashing spiral, jab "Pupugi"

"I heard you've been two-timing a couple of Slytherin girls Harry." The bushy haired girl admonished. She was still a little skittish around Harry but her displeasure at the rumour outweighed her current level of discomfort.

"Pupugi" Another near transparent beam flashed out the tip of his Elm wand before he replied with "where did you hear that Hermione?"

"Neville was very upset last night and I finally got out of him the reason why this morning." Harry continued firing at the targets in the Room of Requirement "He was unhappy with some of your

comments he overheard regarding Bellatrix LeStrange, and he told me about your spending time with two different girls."

"It was at the same time so it's hardly two-timing is it? 'Pupugi'" Turning to the teenage girl he went on to ask "Why should Neville care about what I have to say about Bella anyway?" Apparently it being at the same time was too far out of her realm of experience because it took a while for the black haired boy's comment to permeate.

"I couldn't get it out of him, though I've never seen him so angry when he said her name. I think he might have tried to hurt you had you been there." Harry just waved his hand dispassionately and went back to overpowering his spells. "Are you nervous about the Task? I heard Angelina talking about all the preparation she's been doing and all the Griffindors are helping her out."

"Are they still wearing Draco's pathetic badges?" He questioned, ignoring her earlier query because he actually was a little nervous. Who wouldn't be if they knew they were going to be fighting a Dragon in less than a day.

As she was about to answer in the affirmative Padfoot walked in with a cheery "I've got it. Had to buy it from a shop down Knockturn Alley, and it cost a stupid amount, but I got it."

He handed the purple potion to his godson who commented "It can't have been that much, it's not that difficult to brew. I still think we should have gone with the whole villainous spikes thing, it would help complete the image."

The dog animagus thought it over but didn't comment.

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"Dragons, oh my lord, who would have thought it. What kinds of people would make teenagers fight Dragons? I for one am surprised and flabbergasted at this totally unforeseen turn of events."

The tent with the three lesser champions and a former Beater named Ludo Bagman all glare at the black haired boy who had the temerity to spout such insincerity. He drew a blue-grey Swedish Short-Snout and was scheduled to attempt to retrieve his golden

egg first. The others received their own Dragons with Angelina getting a Welsh Green and Princess Delacour the honour of facing off against the Horntail.

When left alone Harry's former Quidditch teammate growled "You knew the whole time didn't you."

"Of course, everyone knew, didn't you?" Ah the devil may care attitude really did a number on the pretty chaser, especially when she noticed the others looking like they all in fact did know of this beforehand. So he ignored her and, nodding to Krum who he had no problem with, turned the beautiful Fleur and as sincerely as possible he asked "Would you like some help with the Horntail, those things are actually quite dangerous you know."

The repeated barbs over the course of the last few weeks, combined with that accidental jostling into the mud a few days ago, had the French woman more pissed off at Harry than she was concerned about facing a Dragon. As she expressed her opinion as to the character of one Harry James Potter he downed the purple potion and aged almost three years before their eyes. Ignoring her continuing tirade, he wrapped a finely made cloak embossed with the Potter family crest and walked out to face the crowd attempting to look imposing, the kind of man who could face down one of these creatures with ease.

Scoping out the area Harry noted the golden egg, and that the Short-Snout was shackled to the ground. That's good, he'd brushed up on his dragons over the past two weeks and knew that this breed was nimble in the air but less capable on the ground. They were also able to command a bright blue flame which was amongst the hottest of the species.

"Concussus, Confringo"

Bright flash of light and a deafening roar masked the explosive blasting curse. Direct damage spells are basically useless against Dragons, so it was more like a love tap than anything. Just trying to get its attention.

Sirius had said that the eyes are the vulnerable point, and on further research the ear canal, as well as under the arms/wings. Basically

you could only land spells places where the hide was thin or absent entirely, and those places were far from being easily accessible.

Tossing a few more blasters at it and getting an idea as to the things 'flaming' range, he thought how the original plan had to be dropped in the early stages. Levitating heavy weights and pounding the thing into unconsciousness would have been nice but he didn't have the focus to Transfigure weight large enough, nor the power to engorge one of the existing rocks.

"Well this is getting me nowhere..." he muttered under his breath "...I need to get closer."

He set about slowly Transfiguring a thick solid shield out of one of the rocks, and after three minutes Harry was happy with his creation, big enough to crouch behind and tough enough to take Dragon fire, he hoped. Putting as strong a featherweight charm as he could on the medieval style shield, he picked it up in his left hand and moved to the edge of dragonfire range.

He set about harassing it with repeated 'Confringo' blasts until it flamed and he had to lean back and take the hit. It was not much due to the extreme range, so once the heat dissipated he scrambled as fast as he was able, closing as much distance before she could breathe flame a second time.

Turtling behind his heraldic protection once again he thought to himself 'this is probably a very bad idea,' as a huge wash of heat slammed into him. Pretty severe scorches and almighty torrents of sweat poor off him until the dragonfire eventually lessened, leaving him worse for wear but blessedly alive.

Throwing down the barely held together shield Harry took aim at the twenty foot reptile "Pupugi," a miss well wide and to the right. "Pupugi" closer, 'Damn it Harry, you've just got to get the eye,' the Dragon was recovering for a third breath as it was still too far to use teeth or claws, he only had one more shot at this. Otherwise it would be Harry Potter barbecue time.

Taking the time for a last steadying breath he began the familiar wandmotions, well drilled over the last several days. Slashing spiral, jab "Pupugi" a high level piercing curse, the strongest spell he knew, careened toward the left eye of the towering bluish-grey lizard. It

lanced deeply through the soft mass of flesh and straight through her brain.

The right side of her body dropped instantly, with the working limbs twitching, dragging the dying creature in a rough half-circle to the sound of pain filled howls. More than a little disturbed by the noises Harry turned to the crowd and muttered "Accio Sword" as he pointed in the direction of his godfather.

Taking the ruby encrusted weapon he had once used to slay a Basilisk in his left hand, he advanced on the thrashing beast, shoving the sword to the hilt into the poor creatures remaining eye, a mercy killing for a noble animal. One who was, like Harry, roped into a brutal contest for the amusement of ignorant witches and wizards the world over.

And so it was that Harry Potter claimed one more life, this time to thunderous applause.

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Lens of Sanity

I'm really just making this up as I go along. I have read every single piece of FanFiction on the internet and now am relegated to writing my own. I have a few ideas as to where I'm headed and I know how I'm playing Bellatrix and Dumbledore, but a reviewer named StPhoenix suggested the whole ex-con angle and I'm going with it. So if you have any ideas, or requests as to what you would like to see, stick them in a review and I'll credit you when I use them.

Chapter Three: The One Whose Pigtales You Pulled

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Harry finally acknowledged that he had the monster of all headaches as he sat in the stands beside his godfather. He had picked up a pain potion from Madam Pomfrey but refused the burn healing ointment because the scorching he got was all indirect, and he'd rather watch the other champions than sit in a medical tent any day of the week.

"You're crazy Harry, what made you decide to bum rush the Dragon?"

Rubbing his temples he answered Sirius' question "I couldn't get a pot shot in from long range, hell I could barely manage one from that distance. Besides, you always say it is results that matter, and it worked didn't it?"

"Can't argue with that..." He agreed nodding "...You flashed a Visible Aura on that last piercer by the way, that really put you over the edge on the whole 'being impressive' angle."

Said Aging Potion began wearing off as Angelina squared up against the Welsh Green, she was using a similar method to Harry, aiming for the eyes with a Conjunctivitis Curse and following up with a bit of Transfiguration that was far out of Harry's league. Eventually a huge swarm of tiny birds was swelling around the Chaser, maybe even numbering in the low thousands.

"That was pretty cool" the younger stated. To think that she's the only one of the champions who was making it up on the fly.

Dropping a Disillusionment Charm on herself she commanded the swarm, or maybe flock saying as they're birds, to attack the half-blind reptile. She was attempting to distract it and slip by unnoticed. At about the eight minute mark Angelina was back in her starting position uninjured and beaming. 'Good going girl, mine was better I think, but not bad at all.'

Krum summoned the Firebolt he had used to win the Quidditch World Cup, hexing the shit out of the Chinese Dragon and landing two consecutive Conjunctivitis Curses was enough for him to slip by

unnoticed. For a while at least, he had almost got burned to a crisp on his extrication attempt.

"It was very nice how you charmed that Dragon" Harry said to the part-Veela in condescending approval a short time later "It is interesting to see that even reptiles are affected by your aura."

She ignored him, instead attempting to go the route of aloof aristocrat who was above consorting with the likes of such English scum. Harry smiled in what he hoped was a winning way, trying for the look his onetime Defence Professor Gilderoy Lockhart used all the time "You did very well for second place, you should be proud of yourself leetle girl."

'Okay, throwing her own words back at her is probably going a bit far there Potter, you don't want to find out if there really is such thing as a castration jinx.'

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As three people come out of a Pensieve borrowed from the Headmaster Sirius said "Told you the Ageing Potion was a good idea."

"That you did, I looked scary as hell didn't I?" Harry noted with pride.

"I cannot believe you killed a Dragon Harry, I read about it once and powerful wizards used to go out a try to slay one as a kind of initiation ceremony. I checked the library after the task and you are the eleventh youngest in history, displacing Wilfred Elphick from back in the twelfth century."

He mulled this news over smiling, the Prophet predictably played it off as a sure sign of his evil and dangerousness, but at this point Harry found himself more or less immune to criticism.

"When I picked up the Pensieve Albus continued in his vein of not helping, he was talking about your 'splendid gift for producing wandless Patronus Mist,' and he then spent considerable time wandlessly performing several feats of magic before he would let me go."

"You think he wants me to see how much I can pull off without a wand then?" Really, the enchantments on that cup preventing him from directly helping must be pathetic.

"I don't see why we shouldn't add it to the rotation. You'll be mostly on your own though, the only wandless stuff I can really do is Apparate and summon my wand. So you're going to have to figure it out for yourself for the most part."

"Any book knowledge for us Herms?"

"Do not call me Herms thank you very much..." she scowled "...and no not really, you seem to have worked out the difficult part already. The one decent book I found after you told me about the Mist said basically the same thing you did; 'force the universe to bend to your command,' which I found to be quite frustrating because the book didn't say how to go about doing such a thing."

"We may as well get on with it then."

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For Harry, things settled into a fairly predictable pattern over the next fortnight of thirty hour days; Sparing, precision casting, emerging wandless abilities, and the distractions offered by his two pet Slytherin girls. That last not taking up as much time as he would have liked, sloping off further when he noticed 'Daph,' as she hated to be called, was developing a bit of an infatuation about one of the sixth years, a Hufflepuff he vaguely believed to be named Colin Digby. A belief which was palpably false due to the number of times he was corrected.

Another thing he became aware of was that Hermione did not like being second best when it came to her studies. "It's not entirely your fault Herms, you were born a girl, and girls are just not as good at maths as boys. You can't hope to compete against me in a course like Arithmancy which relies so heavily on mathematical ability."

Harry remembered a time long ago when intentionally annoying people in this way would have been the furthest goal in his mind. Trying to annoy her by being magically more powerful, or knowing how to conjure fire wandlessly just wouldn't work, but calling her Herms and saying she was inherently inferior would get her more

worked up than when she recently found out about Hogwarts House-Elves.

Professor Kitty Kat finished her lecture on cross species Transfiguration and the brunette was still refusing to make eye contact let alone speak to him. Harry briefly wondered why he was bothering to show up to this class when Padfoot was smashing his head against a wall attempting to teach the far more advanced Duellist Transfiguration to his less than gifted godson.

"Potter. The champions and their partners will, as tradition dictates, open the ball with the first dance." Harry nodded along having not been paying attention through her end of class speech. 'Yeah, she was saying something about a ball wasn't she?'

"I've broken up with my girlfriends Professor so I don't have a partner. I'll just skip it."

For some reason the plural annoyed her more than the implication that he was going to skip an important even. "You will find a partner, and you will dance. It is your duty to the school and tradition."

Harry has a few choice things to say to that but was shuffled out the door before he could earn a detention. One which he would doubtlessly fail to show up at, just like all the times he had done so when Snivellus -as Padfoot always called him- attempted to force one on him.

"Do you have a date to the Yule Ball Herms?" he probably shouldn't have tried to provoke her with the nickname at the same time as he asked her out, or maybe it was more the assumptive 'of course you don't' way of asking that got her back up.

Hitting him in the balls with a Stinging Hex she screamed "Of course I already have a date Harry! And I wouldn't go with you if you were the last man alive."

As he doubled over in pain Harry for some reason got the impression that the girl was displeased with him.

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"Just ask her" Harry was fruitlessly attempting to Transfigure a conjured dog into a solid shield, a method of defence the one time Duelling Instructor called 'Transhields.'

"I don't know what you're on about Sirius." He was not doing well, the only way these shields are useful was if you could snap them into place. Taking forty five seconds to slowly change living tissue to none-living stone, was not in any way useful in a fight. "Can't we just stick to direct damage spells? I'm actually good at those, there is none of this stupid swish-flick bollocks."

"No we can't. If you are up against Unforgivables or any number of other curses transhields are what you're going to want between you and your opponent. But don't try to distract me, just ask her you crazy bastard, you killed a Dragon at fourteen for Merlin's sake you can ask a girl out."

Sighing Harry said "I don't know where you got the idea I'd even want to go with her Sirius. I think you're just living through me, get your own life damn it."

He took a moment to glare disbelievingly at his godson "Nobody spends that much time or goes to that much trouble to get into a girl's face, unless they are interested. It's like what the muggles say 'when you're in infant school you always pull the hair of the girl you like.'"

"She's a conceited bitch with no personality. I don't see how you can even think I'd be interested." The dogman made a few comments to this statement and eventually Harry muttered not far enough under his breath "Yeah well, Bella said pretty much the same thing."

"WHAT! When did you talk to Bellatrix?"

"Erm, last weekend."

Sirius closed his eyes and appeared to be making a prayer to the gods "And given that the high security third of the prison does not allow visitors, how were you able to hold such a discussion?"

"She's all alone there Sirius, you can't expect me to just forget about her can you?"

"Please tell me you're not still trying to come up with ways to break her out."

"I can't break her out, the only reason I can even get in there is because of my Cloak, the Dementors don't appear to see me when I'm under it. But when I tried to get her out with it they got all shirty and disagreeable."

Rubbing his eyes the man pointlessly stated "She's evil, she deserves to be in there..." The boy just rolled his eyes. Changing the topic back the man commented "...So anyway she agreed with me then. You should just ask her out."

"Screw you Sirius Black."

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"Hey, scabby princess, McGonagall needs to know if you have a date to the dance."

Fleur looked over at her questioner with scorn "I have not yet decided amongst my prospective admirers. You are to tell her this." The French girl responded in a way which implies she was sending him on an errand.

The black haired young man was not pleased with the order and so further aggravated the situation with "I would have thought you could Aura your way into at least one halfway decent date, just goes to show how much a poisonous personality will harm a person's love life" and he turned away with a look of triumph on his face.

"Out of interest, who exactly are you taking to this Yule Ball? I happen to know you have recently found yourself absent of love interests." Rita bloody Skeeter again, to think she was in the same dorm as pretty young Bella when at Hogwarts. His opinion of the journalist was bottoming out a bit, at least Harry still liked Bella.

"I'm going stag." An idea apparently flashed into his head "No, in fact I'm going with you Mademoiselle Delacour."

"What?" Her shrill yell made a number of people at the table take notice.

"Yes. That would be perfect, pathetic French wannabe escorting the real champion. It's not like any date you'd get would be able to go with you, all your little fans would be going with Fleur's Veela Aura, leaving you all alone and bored." She was about to object on principle and he just stated "We shall meet at seven forty five in the Entrance Hall, you are to give your best attempt at dressing fashionably, I will not have you showing up and embarrassing the real Tri-Wizard Champion."

At this he moved off, leaving more than just the French contingent speechless.

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Harry didn't feel too great.

He'd met up with the blonde Ravenclaw third year in an attempt to negotiate some help in his plan and she had been somewhat agreeable. It was quite simple; put a Confundus Charm on the Ravenclaw Quidditch Captain Roger Davies so that he thought this blond was in fact Fleur Delacour, the two Ravenclaws could then go have fun at the Yule Ball together.

She said that it was a fairly reasonable request and only required a yellow jelly baby to be delivered to her bed on Solstice morning, and that the jelly baby needed to weigh the same as she does. Fine that made a kind of sense, and tracking down a muggle candy, then engorging it enough to meet her requirements wouldn't be all that hard.

When asked why she didn't do the engorging herself she says it was because Harry was facing in the direction of the Constellation of Orion when he initially requested aid, as well as the fact that they both happened to be in the northern hemisphere at the time.

When it was brought up that a person cannot see the Constellation of Orion in the southern hemisphere, she responded that just because you can't see a thing didn't mean it wasn't there. This also made a kind of sense, though why it should matter with regards to the jelly baby was less than clear, but by this point Harry was having a little trouble keeping up with her.

Her last request, asked in a seemingly offhand way, was for Harry to buy her a drink in a tea shop on the next Hogsmeade weekend, and Harry just kind of acquiesced in a confused sort of way.

Walking away from this conversation Harry didn't feel so great. It's similar to how one would feel when your gut was telling you that the second hand car salesman had gotten something by, and for the life of you, you can't figure out what it was.

"Are you ready for tomorrow kid?"

"Hmm, oh, yeah. Will you pick me up some jelly babies later? I have kind of a headache."

"Voldemort again? Those are getting too frequent for my liking." Harry had been training a lot ever since he got the Time-Turner, and one thing that he'd noticed was that being tired seems to make him more accessible to the Dark Lord's mind, or something like that anyway. All he knew was that headaches suck and that pain potions tasted awful.

"No, no. Not this time at least, just remember the jelly babies. They are important."

"Okay jelly babies, got it. I want to get you working on accuracy with that offhand column of fire you've been creating, I know you said it's inefficient and draining but it is still worth learning." Sirius started conjuring small birds and having them fly toward Harry, who then tried to torch them out of the air without a wand.

His headache was even worse by the time he quit.

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"Confundo" 'It really is good that her name is Luna, at least the whole moon thing gives you warning that the girl is a total wackjob.' Harry thought this to himself as he watched the cherubic blonde walk off arm in arm with the sixth year. He would never learn that Luna was humming a song with the words 'Harry Potter, off his rocker' at precisely the same moment.

Sweeping majestically into the Entrance Hall platinum hair loose and framing her flawless face, the Beauxbaton Champion Mademoiselle

Fleur Delacour looked less a woman than she did an untouchable goddess, the picture of perfect beauty and elegance. "You are late, it is seven fifty five and I told you to be here ten minutes ago..." He paused in thought and clearly looked her over "...At least you don't look too horrible, I expected a little more of an effort but it will have to do."

"I am not 'ere to meet with you 'Arry Potter" her accent was slipping, she must have been having as much of a great time with this as Harry was.

"No? Who do you claim you are meeting?" He asked lightly. At her response he said "The Ravenclaw? Erm, I don't know how to break this too you but he's already in there. Are you sure he knew you'd agreed?"

The French woman knew there was something wrong with that statement, but right at that moment Professor McGonagall's voice called, "Champions over here, please!" and Harry took her arm whisked her toward the Great Hall.

Angelina was looking gorgeous, she's on the arm of a guy Harry vaguely recalled played for Puddlemere, the same team Olly Wood got signed for, and Krum was with, "Hermione?" he exploded. She answered triumphantly with a smug little smile. Harry turned to Krum and loudly whispered "Not bad, she's a live one though so watch yourself."

"You are with Ms. Delacour Harry?" his no longer bushy haired friend asked.

"Yeah, it's a last minute thing. To be honest I think she hexed my date." He didn't even bother attempting to say this circumspectly. Realisation dawned on the stunning woman's face at this statement, and as Harry's date was about to begin shouting he cut in with "Smile my dear, pretend you knew about this the whole time, you wouldn't want to lose face in front of the cameras now would you?"

Everyone applauded as the champions entered the hall and Harry, once more using an Ageing Potion so as to appear appropriately champion-like, offered a proud smile with the most desirable woman in the room on his arm.

Pulling out a chair for the French woman at the top table, Harry then took a seat for himself beside a stern and imposing figure he learned to be one of the organisers of this event named Mister Crouch. Harry felt an unaccustomed rightness in the world, one which was subtly not being shared by his companion. "I have taken the liberty to inform the House-Elves that your meal is to be prepared in the English way, as you are well known for preferring; much grease, and foods heavy on carbohydrate."

Who knew witches of Veela decent lose control of their aura? Harry found himself glad that she cannot perform the full avian transformation. "You have to be the most infuriating person I have ever had the misfortune to meet." She ground this out in a heavy French accent.

"Why thank you Fleur, I am honoured to be bestowed such a remarkable title." He said with a winning smile. "To think, if we were competing in this childish competition using Durmstrang rules you would have gotten the opportunity to duel me. Alas the road not taken."

"It is likely I would have killed you." Harry just nodded condescendingly "What did you do with my original date may I ask?"

That came out in a tone far closer to a demand than a requesting, and Harry just gestured to the poor besotted Roger Davies who was hanging on the younger girls every word.

The woman petulantly began working her way through a plate of brutally overcooked lamb chops, eventually she gave in and asked the one question whose answer she couldn't figure out on her own "Why do this? It is clear you are unaffected by my Veela heritage, and it is equally clear I dislike you strongly. So why do it?"

"Two of my friends seem to be under the impression that I like you. I personally think they are wrong, but the idea interested me regardless. I wished to discover for myself whether there was anything beneath your poisonous exterior." That was not the response she had been expecting "So far it appears my first instincts were correct." Though the follow up was just the kind of thing she'd expected.

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The dance was interesting, he'd stayed with his godfather's advice and kept things simple, having ones hands on a stunning woman had its perks after all. As the song finished and his date was about to take her first opportunity to excuse herself, Harry turned his back on her and approached Angelina without a second glance backwards.

"Care for a dance my lady?" Harry took her hand and pulled her into the second, much faster song.

After a while she gave up the whole rigid and put upon attitude, mainly because Harry refused to let go and she'd have been forced to cause a scene in the middle of the dance floor to escape "What do you want Potter?"

"Straight to business I see, no time for the pleasantries, any of the finer things in life?" He saw the look on her face and decided to drop his ridiculous playful act "Fine Johnson, I'll get to the point. You were the only champion who went into the first task without preparation, I do not know if you were aware but cheating is one of the core aspects of this thing."

"What are you saying?" some of the hostility dropped from her tone.

"I'd love to see you get naked and swim about in the prefect's bathroom with your egg." With a roguish smile he continued "Then again I am kind of a pervert."

He disengaged as the song ended, leaving the other Hogwarts Champion unsure as to whether or not her competition was helping or being his usual insufferable self.

Catching up with Sirius about ten minutes later they got on with the second plan, the basic idea being that such a high profile event like this was the perfect distraction for a prank. Although what they were doing even Harry thought was a little mean.

"Come on, this is Snape for Merlin's sake. How can anything we do to him be considered mean?" the older man questioned.

"I dunno, he did try to save my life when I was a little first year, he can't be evil all the way through can he? Besides Albus likes him." The younger responded.

"You know, he was infatuated with Lily when we were in school. After they stopped being friends in fifth year he kind of started stalking her."

"What! He was friends with my mother? How come nobody ever mentioned this before now?"

Sirius shrugged "Never really seemed important."

"...Stalking?"

"A bit yeah."

"Fuck it, stop taking and start cursing." No more did the younger think that a precision babbling hex mixed with a compulsion was too mean. What's making a greasy evil Potions Master start hitting on eleven year old boys, when compared to stalking a person's mother?

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"You know your eyes really look beautiful in the moonlight." Harry said in his best corny line spouting voice.

"What do you want 'Arry, it appears you 'ave won tonight's unexpected challenge. Can you not leave me to watch 'ze stars in peace?"

They were in the rose garden, and other than a few preoccupied teenagers the two were all alone. Harry had recently passed a leaving, and visibly upset Olympe Maxime on the way over to his date. "You seem sad. I was expecting angry not sad."

"You have had your fun at my expense, and I find myself no longer caring. Not only are you ahead in 'zis tournament, but I see you 'elping your schoolmate even though she is clearly less fond of you than I."

After standing in thought for a while he came to a decision "Can you fly? Like on a broom."

Not even bothering to ask at this point she just answered "Oui, though I prefer other methods as broom riding is uncomfortable."

"Come, I'm going to show you something cool."

Fifteen minutes later the two champions found themselves on the roof of Hogwarts, it felt like tallest point in the world despite the mountains in clear view. "As far as I know the only way to get up here is by flying, there are no staircases that I've seen which can access the very top. Hell, nobody is even sure how many floors the castle has, but the view from here is one of the best. I do not know why I am the only person who has wondered what is up here."

The French girl looked around, the sight really was remarkable, you could see the whole vista of Hogsmeade, the Forbidden Forest, Black Lake, and everything Britain's sole magical-only community had to offer. "Why bring me 'ere?"

"I don't rightly know, it just seemed the thing to do. Bella and Padfoot both said I should give you a chance, so I'm going to stop being a dick in the hopes that there is more to you than you're letting on."

Two hours later Harry left.

He may have accidentally taken both brooms.

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Lens of Sanity

Personally I doubt anyone would be able to pull off landing Fleur as their date in such a way, but there is a saying that goes 'it's easier to get forgiveness than permission,' so who knows it might actually work. I think it kind of goes along with the whole not giving a crap about anything angle... maybe.

Up next a Jim Bern Lake Task.

Chapter Four: It's All About Attitude

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"You left her on the roof?"

"Yeah." Harry said scratching the back of his head.

"Why?" the man asked exasperatedly following a long pause.

"I dunno, it just seemed the thing to do. Do you honestly think I have any idea why I do half the shit that I do?"

After a brief consideration of this new insight into the mind of one Harry James Potter, Sirius asked "When are you going to let her down then?"

"She'll be fine, annoying as she can be sometimes the woman is actually quite talented. If she can't even cast an 'Aresto Momentum' she kind of deserves to be up there." Harry replied, waving it off negligently. "So what are we doing today, I can't be bothered to do my Potions homework and I think we'd better start getting on with February's task."

"Solid Shields" Harry just groaned "Yeah, well they are important, it's not my fault you are the least talented student I've ever heard of."

Normally he would argue with a comment like that, but saying as Harry was beginning to suspect he's actually getting worse rather than better he refrained "How is that preparing for an underwater task?"

"It's not, but you suck, and we're going get past this one way or another." He began steadily throwing hexes in the new room they had found. They had gotten sick of hanging out in the same duelling area and began asking the Room of Requirement for different settings, today's being a cathedral like expanse of junk, the detritus accumulated by a thousand years of people hiding things in the school.

After the fourth Stinging Hex to the arse Harry lost patients and a full blown duel broke out. Levitating an old rusted axe into the path of a mild bludgeoner, Harry managed to land an 'Evebero' on his

godfather, the stunner which can't be reversed by a simple 'Rennervate' took the older down and scored a rare win for the younger.

Hermione walked in behind Hermione and the two girls flashed identical expressions at Harry's childish victory dance. "Hey guys what's up." He stated when he finally spots them, taking in stride the fact that they seem to be twins now.

"Guys?" she started to ask before seeing the prone form "Have you killed your godfather Harry?"

"Nar he'll be alright, the three of us should do something to him while he's out you think?"

The closest bushy haired girl knitted her brows together "Three?"

Harry applied the counter chant, then he gestured over her shoulder and the second girl gave a confident greeting in Hermione's distinctive voice.

Surprised she squeaked out a "Who are you?"

"I'm Hermione Granger, nice to meet you." She said sticking out her hand as if to shake it.

"You cannot possibly be Hermione Granger, I'm Hermione Granger."

"So am I." She stubbornly insisted as Sirius' newly conscious form looks on in amusement at how worked up she Hermione was getting.

"No you are not. I demand you tell me who you are."

Rolling her eye's the second girl went on "I am Hermione, I have returned from the future with the aid of a Time-Turner to give you a dire warning. A terrible doom is about to befall you and without making drastic changes now, things will all end in sorrow." The brunette faltered a little. "Although I distinctly remember about five hours ago, my future self gave me a similar warning, and it appeared to set off a chain of events which caused said doom to befall us, and necessitated I return to the past to give forewarning."

Harry began rubbing his temples slowly, a feeling he had noticed only once before causing yet another headache. After a moment he remembered where this sensation was last experienced "You're Luna Lovegood Polyjuiced to look like Hermione aren't you?"

It was mostly a guess but it had a gut feeling of rightness too it. "Perhaps, but then again it could be that Luna Lovegood is always Hermione, and she goes around the castle Polyjuiced to look like an attractive blonde muggle she has tied up in her family's basement."

Taking this too in stride Harry went on. "Okay, say that is the case. How then can the two of you regularly be in the same room at the same time?"

"Simple, using the same Time-Turner I used to come back in time to warn you about the oncoming Doom, and possibly causing it to happen by giving you the warning about it."

Harry briefly wondered when his life became filled with conversations like this.

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The four eventually got back to attempting to have the champion learn solid shields; Harry, Sirius, Hermione, and Hermione/Luna. The last simply assuming she was going to help and nobody really noticing she was never actually invited.

After forty minutes, and Harry once more failing to make any progress the now lone brunette asked a question. "Dumbledore had to Obliviate a couple of first years after breakfast, and Snape was muttering about killing the two of you. Do I want to know why?"

"Probably not," Harry instantly answered "we'll tell you when you are older though. It was classic."

"Does it have anything to do with the French Champion's attempts at sounding out whether or not Snape would require help?"

"No actually." Sirius chimed in "That was a completely separate set of circumstances your genius classmate decided on." Harry just smiled at his godfather, Fleur was beginning to grow on him.

"Come on we'll go get something to eat, we need to come up with a strategy for this pathetic lake task."

Hammering out a few extra details over lunch took a fair while with everyone basically just pooling their ideas and coming up with the kinds of magic Harry was going to have to focus on over the next two months.

Three days after the New Year Hedwig returned from her short trip to the continent, missive from Apolline Delacour clutched in her talons. Coming up with an appropriately believable lie in order to get the information required was challenging as approaching Fleur's parents for information was likely something her aura-addled fanboys had tried in the past, many times.

He'd been consciously avoiding his fellow champion since their last meeting, quite a difficult thing to pull off confined in such a relatively small environment, and now he was ready for a second date regardless of whether or not she was.

Having the fanatically eager to please house-elves cook a dish soaked in a red wine sauce was fairly straight forward, though Harry himself had never tasted 'Coq au vin' it was apparently the French woman's favourite dish, tracking down a bottle of 1956 Mouton Rothschild to have with the meal was far more difficult. 'Are you supposed to drink red wine if the dish is cooked in the stuff?' he idly thought to himself.

"This isn't going to work Harry." His pessimistic friend inserted.

"Of course it is, I'm going to spike her drink with a potion so she'll not curse the shit out of me at first glance."

Not really reassured as to this revelation Hermione stated "You know Love Potions are probably not going to work either, doubtlessly a woman like her carries around an antidote to even Amotientia."

"Why would you want an antidote, Amortentia tastes great."

"Yeah, well not everyone can throw off its effects like you can, besides you're sidestepping my concerns. You are dosing a woman

with love potion, that is wrong and I am going to be forced to stop you."

"I'm not." He protested.

"You're not what?"

"It's not a love potion, what do you take me for? I'm spiking her with a Draught of Peace so she doesn't attack me and can enjoy the date."

Frowning, his bookish friend put in a second obstacle "Okay fine. What makes you think she'll even agree to meet with you, I've overheard some of her comments regarding you. She is not your biggest fan."

Shaking his head he went on "Hermione, Hermione, Hermione, you're looking at this in too straightforward a manner. She is obviously crazy about me, and I have no intention of asking. I'm going to get Albus to turn her pillow into a portkey, he's the Headmaster so his portkeys work under the Hogwarts wards. I've already stolen her pillow and can simply sneak it back in there once he's spelled it."

"Her pillow, meaning you are kidnapping her as she lays down to sleep?"

"Yeah, hopefully she sleeps skyclad like I do." He finished with a cheeky smile.

After a very long pause the brunette said "I'm becoming worried about your mental state Harry."

"Are things still going Krummy in your love life Hermione?"

She just scowled.

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It was 9:25am on the 24th of February and the frigid air was biting deep through the formal robes of Harry Potter.

"Like my boots?" he said to the still irate French girl, motioning to the gray-blue leather boots Sirius had ordered made for a Solstice gift from the hide of the first task dragon. He had a matching wallet and belt too, the latter of which he was also wearing as this was a special occasion.

"Please do not speak to me." She ordered, in a voice attempting to be dispassionate.

What amuses Harry was that their second date/kidnapping was an event they both truly enjoyed, and the French woman cannot really say otherwise without them both knowing it a lie. The Draught of Peace really helped her relax and simply enjoy her favourite foods, and Harry's charming conversation.

She had been avoiding him like the plague ever since and this was the first conversation they'd had in months.

"I like the boots, they scream; 'Harry Potter: Dragon Slayer,' don't you guys agree?" he asked in an attempt to draw in 'the lesser' champions.

Angelina had been warmer since she cracked the egg clue and discovered with surprise that Harry really was helping. "They do have a certain style about them I suppose." She responded and Krum kind of nods. Harry liked him, opportunities to needle Hermione aside, he was actually good for her.

"Thanks, everyone read up on their Bubblehead Charms?" this made all three of them smirk "What?"

The two females held up some kind of plant, and Viktor said he didn't need one. "What's the plant?"

"Gillyweed, allows one to breathe underwater. We are in no need of childish spells like 'ze Bubblehead Charm." The part magical creature seemed overly cheerful to have finally gotten one over on him for some reason.

As they were lead off to the starting point Harry bemoaned to himself at how tired he was. They hadn't thought to take it easy in training yesterday because Harry was usually back to full strength after a nights rest and it didn't really seem to be much of a problem,

but then hammering that one final spell kept him up longer than it should have.

Couple this with Draco fucking Malfoy and his idiotic goon squad setting up a bloody ambush on the way back to his rooms, and Harry was finding himself competing in this task with a mild case of magical exhaustion. It briefly occurred to him that he wishes he had not bet on himself as the winner this time, could have made a killing betting on one of the underdogs.

A whistle echoed shrilly and the four champions of the Tri-Wizard Tournament were off. Fleur and Angelina chomp down on their Gillyweed and their bodies began to morph, amongst other things growing gills. Applying his, now kind of disappointing Bubblehead Charm, Harry noticed Viktor Krum perform a full animal transformation into that of a shark and disappear into the watery depths.

It was blurry and disorienting beneath the shimmering bubble of air, but oxygen was quite important so he'd take it over drowning. Diving into the lake he discovered one predictable truth, February water was very, very cold "Damn, they are going to vanish into my body and never be seen from again" he grumbled to himself, casting as powerful warming charm as he could as he vanished beneath the surface.

There were four large projectors, one for each champion as this was organised as a spectator event, and the tiny thing Harry thought of as a camera was following his every move. All three other champions were long gone, 'I guess that Gillyweed stuff was a good idea,' and Harry began casting last night's well practised nonverbal spell. One designed to send a fire-hose of water out the tip of a wand, in this situation propelling him far faster than he would have been able to swim.

Other than the scalding to death of a dozen Grindylows and a sub-aquatic blasting curse into the Giant Squid's flank, getting to the potion ingredients in the Merfolk Village was quite uneventful. He was last to arrive there so his idea to Disillusion the other bags and a place Notice-Me-Not charm around the area was scuppered before he could even try.

Coming to the surface he saw only Krum remained brewing the Awakening Potion using his rescued ingredients, and a sleeping Luna Lovegood was on the ground next to the single unused cauldron. Starting to brew, Harry commented "So you're an Animagus then?"

"Da." He answered affirmatively, though clearly preferring not to be distracted.

"My godfather was at me to learn that, but other than being able to lick my own balls when I get board I didn't really see the point." The adult looking black haired boy remarked, probably giving away a little too much personal information.

With a strange look the brunette came too, smiling at the Quidditch player, the two ran off.

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Luna regained precious consciousness and looked into a distinctive green eyed stare. She noted that up close, Harry looked terrible. Pinching the bridge of his nose as if fighting back a headache, he was swaying a little on his feet indicating how tired he must be.

"Ready to go Luna, we're in last place so we're going to have to move lickedy-split."

"Give me the wand Harry, you could use a break for the next little while." He obeyed knowing it was probably a good idea and the two of them enter the path running through the Forbidden Forest.

About ten minutes later Harry was forced to wandlessly banish the blonde through some kind of defensive ward which induced an all consuming feeling of terror, and she accidentally landed in a Boggart Nest. Luna dealt with the threat before Harry could even tell what form her Boggart took meaning she must have had at least one competent Defence Professor.

Asking as much the blue eyed girl dreamily responded "The Werewolf who taught last year showed us how to do it, it is really quite simple when you are prepared."

'A Werewolf? Albus really must hire teachers based on who is most likely to kill his students in some spectacular fashion.' Harry thought to himself without voicing his growing suspicions regarding the man's sanity.

Eventually the two found themselves standing in a clearing with three totems which appeared to be conjuring and controlling dangerous animals. Harry was forced to tackle the younger girl down to avoid the talons of a falcon, then drag her out of the totems' range.

Thinking he decided on a subtle manoeuvre "Give me the wand back, I'll deal with this." Tottering slightly deep in his exhaustion, he took a breath and ignored the pounding in his head.

"Confringo"

"Confringo"

"Confringo"

"Confringo"

Falling to one knee he managed a fifth "Confringo" before everything exploded under the weight of rapidly cast blasting curses.

Due to the noise of the collapsing totems, nobody noticed the black haired boy's pain-filled whimper as he lost consciousness.

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Waking with a flash of red and a cruel smirk, the Horntail wand stunned the blond and transfigured her into a more manageable size, a golden puppy small enough to fit into the palm of one hand. He slipped it into his pocket and shot off a powerful twisted mass of purple energy which consumed the remnants of totem defences.

Thinking 'I will get this foolish task over with and then I can get back to doing what is important' he moved off at a brisk jog, absently torching the 'Spyfly' which was documenting for an audience his trip through the forest.

Coming into a clearing where the four contestants paths were doubtlessly intended to cross, he saw only one of his opponents had reached this point in the same amount of time. Concluding that either he was in front, or was lagging far behind.

The dark skinned child did not spot him so the Confusion Curse struck both her and her aide in the back without ever being spotted, they both span back the way they had come and headed for the lake again. After a few moments invested 'Trapping' the area he headed toward the direction of the finish, an unaccustomed air of malevolence following in his wake.

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Fred and George Weasley were not having a good year so far.

They had invested all of their savings in Krum catching the Snitch in the World Cup Final, an event their father had managed to get tickets for from his friend in the Ministry Games and Sports Department. The press of people down in the pit was uncomfortable, but they had come to the conclusion that it all added to the atmosphere and enjoyment; 'who would want to be in a prize box far from the real fans?' they asked themselves earnestly.

Still, although Krum did in fact catch the Snitch, he did it a little faster than the twins had expected, managing to defeat even the mighty force that was the Irish Chasers. It was so that the two lost all of their gold, signalling a major setback in their post-Hogwarts plans.

The loss of their sister almost two years ago hit their family hard, though by now the twins had bounced back for the most part, better than some members of the family at least. So now they were using money borrowed from George's girlfriend Alicia in an attempt to win back some of their losses.

It did not feel right to bet on Angelina as Fred was still unhappy he had not been fast enough to invite her to the Yule Ball, and while Harry Potter would probably win this task, his odds were far too short to have the chance to make any decent amount of cash by betting on him. Together the twins came to a decision, they would once more take their chances on Krum. His odds were longer than they should be and from the looks of things their fortunes might be changing.

Angelina and her friend had been hit by some form of Confusion Ward and they were heading back toward the lake, the French witch had come to the same clearing and been incapacitated by some kind of pain causing net, taking her down and having to be removed by the Tournament officials. Harry Potter's screen had gone dark a little under ten minutes ago, though he was still in the task at the time, and Krum was nearing the finish.

It was down to the two remaining champions, and the twins were praying for a Bulgarian victory once again.

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'Hmm, finishing four minutes behind the illustrious Mr. Krum, the girl must have been a great help to him.' The green eyed man thought to himself as he stood next to the un-transfigured Luna Lovegood and the two task winners, as he imperiously gazed at the gawping spectators and tiresome Tournament officials.

"And finishing in second place with a time of 28 minutes and 12 seconds; Harry Potter." The amplified voice of Ludovic Bagman called out to the crowd. 'The man is a shade of his former self, pathetic.' Eventually he whisked away, disappearing through the mass of people and headed for the castle.

An hour later the hallway leading to the Headmasters Office was trapped to high heaven and the teenager was beneath his Invisibility Cloak waiting for the next stage of his hastily crafted plan. He saw the old man's eyes twitch toward the shadowed alcove where he was crouched, 'Albus is be able to see through this cloak then, that is unfortunate' he thought as he activated every one of the hurriedly carved single use runes.

Not even waiting to see if any of the magic reached its target he brought to bear twelve and a quarter inches of Elm, unleashing a long string of spells heavy in Dark Curses, all learned long ago in his travels throughout eastern Europe.

Eyes once again flashing malevolent red as the smoke and shrapnel cleared, he noticed that his aged opponent was virtually unharmed behind a powerfully cast mage-shield. With an uncharacteristically sibilant hiss the fourteen year old intoned a long chant in Parsel and

a weaving mass of emerald energy coalesced into the form of a reptilian, dragon-like creature with nine angry heads.

As the bright green hydra closed on its foe a wild blast of elemental magic slammed into the younger man, a gust of hurricane strength wind took his feet out from under him and smashed his body painfully against the far wall. Shaking off the dizzying effects of head meeting stone he wiped the blood from his forehead, clearing his vision.

"Careful there Albus Dumbledore, you do not wish to harm your little protégé now do you, 'Avada Kedavra.'"

The flash of an Unforgivable coincided with the hydra's encountering its opponent, down to four heads now, one of which gets in a scorching bite as the old man raised a solid shield to block, he took a bite as a sacrifice against the lethal flash of green.

As the magical construct was massacred by a sabre of brightest white, the two turned and began steadily trading blows, one's magic dark and deadly, the other's more defensive and aimed at incapacitation.

A triumphant smirk played across the black haired man's visage 'there is no way you can defeat me that way old man.'

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Severus Snape's first hint that things were afoot in the castle was the tremendous surge of magic coming from the seventh floor. His other clues were the almighty thumps, shudders, bangs, and assorted crashes coming from the same area.

Coming upon the Griffindor Head of House he ordered in his customary tone "You deal with the students, I will get up there" before he followed his own words and, cloak billowing, took off toward the scene of the disturbance.

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Palming away a well recognised Dark Slicing Curse the crimson eyed boy let loose a blanket banisher and returned to stringing a chain of offensive magic at the preposterously dressed Headmaster.

"Ah Severus, how nice of you to join us." The ess's were all drawn out in long hisses, the last even dropping into parseltongue. "You will help me destroy this old man, and you will return to the service of your master."

Instead the Potions Professor got to his feet and came to the old man's aid without speaking, adding far more violent spells in his direction than have been cast at him so far.

"Do not harm him Severus, we must capture him not kill." Dumbledore ordered.

"It is well that you have followed my commands so excellently and for so long, even long after my alleged defeat Severus, however should you continue this foolishness I shall be displeased." Two minutes of solid casting by all three before a shield buster hammered against the conjured wall of stone, seven infectious barbs lanced toward both targets at the same instant, three piercing the aged Headmaster and one the shoulder of the younger Head of House.

"Crucio" pinned the already downed Snape with white hot knives of agonising pain "We shall see whether or not you still have any use to me Severus."

Turning to the recovering Albus Dumbledore he separated the wand arm before it could be pointed in anger once again, thinking of a day long ago when this man came to an orphanage in London the red glare twisted further in unholy rage, the tip of his unfamiliar wand glowing a beautiful pleasant green.

"Avada Ked-"

"No!"

A scream, a roar of defiance deeper and stronger than anything he had ever felt dropped the boy to his knees. Blood oozing from the various cuts and scrapes taken over the course of the fight a mere distraction compared to the splattering which spurted from his famous scar as it broke open.

The choking, tortured bellow was unheard by the ears of the boy himself, who pushed with everything he had, somehow desperately attempting to retake control.

The sweet arms of oblivion eventually took him, answering the prayers of all, the boy himself by far the most relieved.

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Lens of Sanity

My thinking on this chapter; other than some whiny headaches and the opportunity to angst at the audience, Harry never seems to experience many problems having a part of somebody else's Soul inhabiting his body, which I find a little strange. Also, Dumbledore never gets enough fight scenes for my liking.

In other news, I'm starting to get a feel for the Harry Potter character in this story. At first I wasn't sure I liked him, which is fine I suppose because nowhere does it say the author or a story has to like his characters, but I'm starting to get into it. I even found the trope I think he might be using.

Chapter Five: Always the Quiet Ones

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Coming to in his much occupied bed in Hogwarts Hospital Wing Harry cracked an eye open and blurrily looked out of the window. He couldn't actually see much of the view without his glasses but he had spent so much time in this exact same bed that he could imagine the branches of the tree with perfect clarity. Sighing he then noticed something far more unusual, he seemed to be tied to the bed and worse, had an extremely rare magic limiting choker around his neck.

'Oh, now I remember. I'm Voldemort. Who knew?' it came out a gurgling groan which brought the attention of the school Healer, with a well disguised look of fear flitting behind her eyes.

As he finished the dreadful potion being fed to him through a straw he got out an important question "Did Albus survive those infectious barbs, Snape too I suppose?"

Looking down on him for a long moment Madam Pomphrey replied "Yes. They are both fine, the Headmaster's arm was reattached quite easily also." It was said in a neutral tone, as though unsure as to how the news would be received.

"That's good. And you can relax, I'm Harry again."

"You will forgive us if we will remain sceptical until testing, I am sure." The grandfatherly man injected as he strode into the room.

"Of course," Harry stated from his uncomfortable position "I am becoming quite the accomplished Occlumens though, so I would probably be capable of resisting Veritaserum." The man looked unhurt, which was a good sign. Harry didn't really want the old coot to break a hip or anything.

"I am going to administer three drops anyway, and I would like you to drop your mental defences. I believe that I am suitably skilled at the art of Legilimency for such circumstances to overcome even Tom's mastery of Occlumency."

The boy nodded his assent and found a pale wand pointed directly between his eyes. A whispered 'Legilimens' and Harry allowed his defences to fall at the surprisingly gentle onslaught of mind magic.

Twenty long minutes later the Headmaster agreed to let him out of his restraints, and the teenager stated "You owe me dinner."

"What was that my boy?" Dumbledore asked, though he'd heard the Harry's words precisely.

"That one experience was more emotionally significant than a full years worth of sex. You owe me dinner, at a very fancy restaurant." It was stated directly, as something that will happen, regardless of the circumstances "Now, do you know what happened?"

The sudden change in direction actually caught the man off guard "...Yes, I have a very detailed theory Harry, one which furthers my suppositions as to the immortality of your parent's murderer."

"Care to share?"

An incredibly frustrated frown knitted the man's brows together.

"I cannot. The magic preventing me from giving you aid appears also to be preventing me..." there was a heavy pause "...I find myself incapable of even thinking about these things in your presence, currently I have an overwhelming desire to converse with you about my socks once again. It is most trying."

"We will speak following the completion of this stupid Tournament then." The boy said this far more firmly than any fourteen year old had any right to, and that was not counting the man he was talking to is considered by many to be the most powerful in the world.

"Yes we shall. I would have done so following your release from Azkaban Prison had I not wished to give you a term to recuperate from the ordeal." What frustrated the old man was that he cannot even advise against using too much magic, as that would be helpful advice when it came to competing in the competition.

'Perhaps if I repeatedly inform Sirius Black as to how tiring using magic can be, and then keep telling him that I always find it best to avoid such exhaustion whenever possible.'

"I require your Pensieve, I will need to figure out a few things on my own."

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"Avada Kedavra" A jet of green flashed out in the Room of Requirement and the conjured baby panda dropped dead to the ground without theatrics.

"If the word at large gets wind of you doing this, they are going to be even more convinced you're about to turn into a Dark Lord." Sirius really didn't like this new aspect to his godson's training sessions.

"At this point I'm actually amazed you can think their opinions matter to me even a little bit." Seeing that the older man was going to make yet another comment about how magic can be inherently evil Harry went on "I didn't just jump into this either, I went to visit Bella again and she told me to be careful with some of the stuff that was used that night, and she suggested I work on the Unforgivables first because they are the safest to learn without a teacher."

"You are going to end up back in your cell you know, and this time you are not going to be innocent."

"They aren't even that bad Sirius, if I killed someone with a 'Reducto' to the face they'd be just as dead, and let's be honest, it'd likely be in a far more painful fashion. Just think of it as a slightly more permanent stunner for people you do not wish to see again, for instance your old friend Wormtail would make a good example of a human being you might aspire to 'stun' in such a way."

It was a very strange, not to mention painful experience going through the Second Task of the Tri-Wizard Tournament. Following his taking down of the Totem obstacles it was as though he were looking through his own eyes, but being unable to move his body, or be even capable of thought itself. Yet he saw, and even felt himself commanding magic at a level far superior to anything he had been able to do before.

The downside far outweighed the benefits of course, but the experience itself was still very valuable.

It was not that Harry suddenly got all of the knowledge piecemeal unfortunately, as he really wanted to be able to create a magical construct in the shape of a Hydra without having to practice. Through the use of Albus' Pensieve he had worked out the Parsel-Chant Harrymort had be using –essentially it was calling forth ancient power and so on using overly flowery language– but with Bellatrix's warning he had decided not to actually attempt to make one himself without a competent instructor present.

Postponing the learning of that awesome twisted mass of purple energy was also a reluctant decision he came to, as well as most of the Dark Curses he had been using in what Sirius named a Spell-String, or Spell-Chain pretty much interchangeably.

Basically for the time being Harry had resolved to learn the two Unforgivables he was now certain he was capable of. This certainty was due to the very vivid memory of which emotion was necessary to power them; the Killing Curse required him to really wish the target dies, and the Torture Curse required the caster to actually desire the target feel pain and suffering.

Pretty simple, and Luna was very interested in learning to properly cast 'Avada Kedavra' for basically the same reason Harry was; namely that it was clearly a very useful spell.

"I still don't think you should be learning this Harry, they are called Unforgivable for a good reason." His oldest friend chipped in once more. Hermione -unlike Luna- really didn't want anything to do with this, and had been putting forth considerable effort to 'bring him to his senses' so to speak.

"I'm only learning a couple of new things, what's the big deal, you liked 'Zbax' the Shield Buster didn't you?" He said ignoring her concerns

Hermione immediately protested this "Breaking someone's shield is not even the same as killing them and you know it Harry!"

Other than the two Unforgivables, they had found a pretty nifty Blanket Banisher, a way to palm Snape's famous 'Sectumsempra' that even Sirius had never seen before, and Hermione's favourite, the Shield Buster.

Using his last new trick, not even dragged from the Pensieve, Harry wandlessly turned the irises of his eyes a deep malevolent scarlet "Ah child, I believe you are beginning to outlive your usefulness" he hissed trailing off into Parseltongue again.

"I wish you wouldn't do that Harry, it's creepy."

"Sirius liked it, and even you admit the look on Snape's face in Potions was funny." What Harry found kind of disturbing was that VoldePotter, or whatever the hell they are going to end up naming him, he actually seemed to imply that Hermione was the reason Krum won the Task. This should be amusing, but really it's kind of... weird, and he sort of just decided not to mention it to his bushy haired friend.

Smiling his godfather ordered "Stick the Snivellus memory in the Pensieve Harry, I want to watch it again."

Shaking his head Harry complied while demanding conjured animals to slay mercilessly, "Fine but I want more baby Pandas Sirius!"

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Harry had been putting this off for too long already, but he had promised to buy his blonde friend a cup of tea at what he later found out was the monstrosity that was Madam Puddifoot's. The tea shop off the main street of Hogsmeade had a reputation far more horrifying to the average student than an Unforgivable Curse, and even when it was not in fact Valentine's Day the place was still steeped in enough sugary sweetness to instantly strike down the unwary with diabetes.

At least the weather wasn't too bad, he would have preferred downpours of rain and a good old fashioned thunderstorm. Still, dry and blowy beat a soaking, and for Scotland in March it was not too cold. Things, at least the weather, could seriously have been worse.

"Cheer up Harry this is going to be fun." The demonic blonde insisted joyfully.

'If I'd not hacked off most of the January Hogsmeade weekend saying I needed to train for the task, this would be over with by now' Harry thought despondently. "I'm going to buy you the most

expensive tea there is Luna, just let's keep this brief okay. Maybe we can go say hello to Albus' brother when we're done?"

He was not hopeful though.

Crossing into the side street toward the dreaded building his companion started "Oops, silly me. I forgot the surprise" while pulling out a Potion which Harry could make a decent guess as to its purpose.

'Yep, Polyjuice again. Damn woman, who are you going to change into this time?'

"Draco Malfoy" he flatly managed to squeeze out in disbelief "I have to sit in an overly romantic setting and buy tea for who everyone will think is Draco Malfoy."

"You weren't complaining the last time I used Polyjuice Potion Harry." Luna said with a meaningful look, sort of challenging him to deny it.

'That was completely different, where the hell does she even get so much of the stuff, it's not like it is a simple potion to brew?'

Deciding it would not be a good idea to begin crying in the middle of the street, he confidently pushed the door holding it open for his blonde date, and her -now no longer suspicious- Unisex Robes.

Things went downhill from there. Although Rita Skeeter herself was nowhere to be seen, Harry did spy a man he believed to be Bozo. Where the former Slytherin's photographer was, she would not be far away.

'Fuck it.'

"Draco, have I ever told you your eyes look..." Harry choked back bile and refused to turn green "...beautiful in the..." 'come on Harry you can do it' "...Spring sunshine?"

'Yay, score one for the ex-convict, he didn't hurl.'

Luna immediately began playing along.

Harry decided that the article in the Prophet was going to be worth it.

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"And Sirius was telling me there is this Troll running for the position of Brazilian Minister of Magic." After he had gotten over the absurdity of the situation Harry found he was quite enjoying his date. Even when she was someone else she was still Luna, it's just that the quirky girl looked different that's all.

"Really? I didn't think many of the ICW constituent nations were all that big on creature rights."

"For the most part you would be right, they are not. Apparently the Hack Administration is really doing some good things, going in new directions and all that."

"Hack? You mean that was true? Daddy didn't run the story because he thought the guy who wrote it was just making the whole thing up."

Surprised Harry said "I never knew your father ran a newspaper."

"Oh yes, the Quibbler is the only accurate source of free journalism in Britain. Besides 'Easy Beekeeping' of course."

"Of course." Strolling arm in arm with the blonde girl/boy Harry noticed a man crossing the street he vaguely remembered sitting next to at the Yule Ball. "Hold on, I might have a picture of him in the newspaper Sirius gave me."

Luna took it and reading the title 'Hack: International Troll of Mystery' she made the exact same comment Harry made when he saw it; "Nice shades."

"Yeah, I want a pair." A man with an extremely severe moustache-'Crouch, that was his name. I remember now, Percy Weasley idealises him' -tossed what appeared to be a Knut in the dark haired boy's direction.

There was an unfamiliar tug somewhere behind his navel and Harry vanished from sight.

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He heavily hit the floor in a room with no light, no windows, and one thick metal door. He still had his wand which was good, there are negation wards preventing its use which was not good.

About ten minutes later the door cracked open and a shadowy figure was lit from behind by painfully bright white light, obscuring the person's features entirely. 'It doesn't matter what he looks like, he kidnaps me that means he is an enemy.'

Harry took a moment and focused all of his magic into a sole desire; 'Heat, I want heat NOW!'

A column of raw fire churned from both the green eyed man's hands, wave after wave building and lessening in intensity with the ebb and flow of his magic. For more than a solid minute he kept up the scorching flames before the eerie tickling of a headache began to break out, signalling a changeover was about to occur.

He cut the wandless fire short to prevent the obvious problems associated with becoming Voldemort, and took in the figure.

"Impressive."

A bright flash of red and everything went black.

Fighting back to consciousness an indeterminate length of time later Harry felt groggy and out of it. His thoughts slow and fleeting, as if they were water and he was attempting to drink from a cup riddled with holes.

'A drink of water, that would be nice.' He may or may not have said it out loud.

Drinking the tasty water he slipped back to oblivion.

Clawing his way back to wakefulness what must have been a long time later Harry noticed that thinking was difficult, like -something strange or unusual- was happening. Maybe. He wasn't sure because it was hard to remember things. There was a bright flash of red, and everything went dark.

It had been a long time, Harry was sure of that. Being sure, that was a good sign. Harry was confident that he was certain about something. He's not entirely sure why being confident about it having been a long time was a good sign, but it was.

He took note of where he was, a bare room. No windows, no light. 'Yes! Of course, I remember now. The door will open and I will fight. Not heat, not fire. Come on think damn it, you, you're Harry, Harry Potter. Heat is bad, no work, will no work, not work, heat bad.'

He didn't recall why fire would not work but he knew it wouldn't, and he knew that someone, something, would open the door. He would fight. He always did.

When the door cracks open after what may have been hours, it was hard to tell in pitch darkness with only the intermittent sound of rats to mark time, a figure backlit by painful light was greeted by a bolt of jagged electricity. A shock of static powerful enough that muggles once thought a wizard named Zeus must have been the most powerful god in creation.

There was the metallic taste of ozone floating strongly in the air as the lightning cleared.

Then a bright flash of red knocked the boy unconscious.

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"Wakey, wakey Harry Potter, how have you enjoyed our hospitality?" Clarity, sweet clarity. For the first time in what felt like years Harry's mind was his own. Looking left and right he found himself tied to a gravestone and from the light it had either just gone dawn or was about to turn to dusk. "You have been with us for eighteen days Harry Potter, surely we have made some impression on you by now?"

"Well, if it's feedback your organisation desires I'd be inclined to say something along the lines of; while the accommodations were first rate the room service was terrible."

Had the dark haired boy not had bigger problems he would have noticed the ragged, singed, and torn nature of his clothing, and the

fact that he stank to high heaven. His pretty red haired captor clearly didn't hold Harry's personal hygiene or appearance in high regard.

"Amusing... as always Harry." She then stabbed him.

"Ouch... So anyway, what have you been doing with yourself Ginny? Personally I've been spending most of my time trying to get into an attractive French girl's panties." 'Whatever she has tied me to this gravestone with is tough, I wish I had my wand.'

Harry noticed a man with dirty blonde hair and watched as he sliced off his arm and throw it into a cauldron. 'Riiight, that was totally gross.' Soon after the girl moved over to the man, being careful not to lose any of Harry's blood from the tip of the knife.

"I have been quite well Harry, studying up on my history for the most part. And of course spending time with my disembodied Lord and Master."

"Sounds like a blast. Any chance of me getting my Holly wand back, it kind of has sentimental value to me?" A dazzling smile from the well developed thirteen year old was accompanied by a shaking of her head which signalled the negative "Shame ...Soooo, we're resurrecting Voldemort then? I've always wanted to take the Dark Mark, really get a chance to make a difference in evil y'know."

Finally allowing Harry's blood to drip from the knife blade into some kind of massive cauldron, she didn't reply, and a short time later the potion was finished and the smoke cleared. Harry found himself treated to a full frontal of the re-bodied Dark Lord. A little more than he really wanted to see, and a little less than he'd actually expected to see "Not a fan of the ladies I'm guessing?"

He ignored this and started on the brief history of Tom Riddle. 'Ah monologuing, it's a classic. Hell who am I kidding, I'd totally be doing the same thing if I was a Dark Lord.' Voldemort stopped short and looked up at Harry "That got through my Occlumency barriers didn't it?"

"Indeed."

"Would you by any chance like to explain all of your plans to me?" Harry asked hopefully.

The two stared at one another for a long time, Harry's skill at mind magics at this point was well up to the task of defending against a Legilimency attack without an incantation. "I think it is best I kill you now, rather than make sport of the occasion."

The redhead looked up at this confused and Harry countered "Probably for the best, I'm way more powerful than you anyway."

The last was said right when Lord Voldemort's Inner Circle Apparated in to the graveyard. 'They heard that Flighty, what are you gonna do?' Harry allowed the taunt through his shields.

"Untie him and give him back his wand."

'You're going to lose.' Harry thought in a sing songy voice. "You know, if you'd let me Cruciate and then murder Lucius Malfoy I would have probably joined you guys."

The Inner Circle found this statement uncomfortable and began shifting their collective weight as Harry was handed the Horntail wand once used by Sirius' grandfather.

"Avada Kedavra, Bumblebee."

The onrushing death magic which spewed out from twelve and a quarter inches of Elm was used solely as a distraction. A wandlessly summoned gravestone impacted brutally with the back of Voldemort's head, viciously stoving in the man's newly physical brains. With a whispered activation phrase to his wrist, Harry portkeyed to the Headmasters Office.

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Giggling madly Harry was helped to his feet by a surprised and relieved Albus Dumbledore. "Harry my boy are you alright, please do your best to calm yourself."

In between giggles he got out that he was in fact fine for the most part, and that he was laughing because something had happened that was just too damn funny for words.

'Of course the Headmaster gave me a portkey Voldemort you prick, he's a good man and he is not stupid.'

Four hours, a much needed shower, an incredibly powerful and dangerous Purging Potion later, and Harry was most of the way toward recovery. With no broken bones and nothing but a little malnutrition, the only problems the Healer was concerned about were the strange potions his captors had been using on him. So using Snape's borderline Purging Potion pretty much solved their biggest concern.

Harry had stuck his memory of events into the well travelled Pensieve of Albus Dumbledore, and the group were looking over the events.

"You have got to be the craziest bastard in the world to just stand there taunting them and exchanging witty banter like you don't even care." Sirius actually sounded more proud of this one fact than he ever had been of anything else in his life.

"Were you not scared at all Harry?" Hermione voiced it, but Luna looked just as bad. The two girls must have been worrying about him a lot over the past, not quite three weeks.

"Of course not, what's the big deal it's just a Dark Lord?"

He conspicuously didn't scream 'Are you fucking kidding me, I was shitting myself the entire time! Being really good at Occlumency means I know how to hide it' but Albus probably picked up on that.

"Besides, I did look fucking badass didn't I?" The collective refusal to admit this underscored in Harry's mind that he did totally look badass "What I want to know is, why was I held for so long? I mean I might have been rescued in the time between then and now. Any ideas about what's so special about today?"

After a bit of arguing the only fact that the group came up with was that today was three days after the Spring Solstice, and overall it was kind of concluded that this must be significant in some way.

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"So the blonde 'arm chopping off' guy from the rebirth ritual turned out to be an escaped Azkaban prisoner named Bartemius Crouch Junior, the son of that straight laced guy who is in charge of International Magical Cooperation at the Minisrty. And that Bartemius Crouch Senior has been under the Imperius Curse for months, and he is the one who put my name in the Goblet of Fire. And furthermore, we assume that at least some of the time Junior has spent being Polyjuiced to look like Senior, so that they can get important things done and a loyal Death Eater can be on Hogwarts grounds when it's important. Following?"

Luna appeared to be, Hermione was frowning slightly but took up Harry's train of thought "And Ginny Weasley was the real Heir of Slytherin, and is still being possessed by a sixteen year old version of Tom Riddle from when he attended Hogwars, before he became Lord Voldemort. Is that right?"

'Erm, I must not have told her that I knew it was Ginny releasing the Basilisk since the Chamber. Oops better not mention that.' "Yeah, that was a shock all round, I'll tell you that for free." 'Probably too cheerful there Harry, well done.'

The brunette continued "And if what Snape said is true, you successfully killed Voldemort again by smacking him in the back of the head with a gravestone. And Crouch Junior is walking around with two silver hands now, so we assume that some of your blood remained on the knife for the Inner Circe to resurrect him again."

"Yep." Harry agreed "And he also said the Death Eaters seem scared of me. Or at least wary, which is a good thing either way."

After a while in confused silence Sirius broke in "This isn't preparing you for the Third Task, get off your arse and get some training done."

"Three months and we can finally get the Headmasters help, I for one am looking forward to some more overarching answers." Padfoot nodded and hurled the first curse.

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Excluding a real date with Fleur Delacour, one which didn't involve any kidnapping or bizarre hijinks on Harry's part, things settled back

to the normal routine. Of course nobody believed Voldemort was actually back, but Harry just accepted that as par for the course. He'd shown the Pensieve memory to a bunch of people and the Rita Skeeter article for the Quibbler was what landed him the Veela date.

Now it was June 24th three days after the Summer Solstice, 'looks like it really is significant to the ritual,' and Harry was about to enter the third task; a maze with all kinds of obstacles and scary monsters. Sexy Dragon leather boots in place Harry's adopted a slouch of relaxed competence which his competition now accepted as genuine.

"Good luck you guys" three uncertain looks from the others and he went on "I actually mean it this time by the way, because you are the real school champions and I was only suckered into this as an assassination attempt."

First allowed into the maze Harry didn't even bother looking like he was in a hurry. He simply walked lazily into the darkness followed by an eager spyfly.

Strolling through the task Harry added many more kills to his name. 'I guess this is what the public wants.' He thought to himself sadly 'At least I get to stock up on awesome Potions ingredients, maybe an Acromantula carapace wand holster or something.'

"Come on Fleur my dear, let's get on with this foolishness."

"Arry, I-," the French champion trailed off. Then something else apparently sprang into her mind "Did you incapacitate 'ze Sphinx?"

He sniffed a laugh "Yeah, blunt force trauma, and Hoarfrost works well against them."

"I think you were supposed to answer 'ze riddle and eet would 'ave let you past."

Harry thought it over "Oh, that's what she was talking about. It makes so much more sense now."

Arriving at the Trophy he just looked expectantly at the shorter girl. 'Strange, I always imagine her towering over me like she's a Giant and I'm a helpless firstie.'

"What?" she asked confused.

"You took down that Acromantula, you could have just left me and you would have won."

"I want to win 'zis Tournament but I never would 'ave stood by an' allowed you to be eaten."

"Hoarfrost, unconscious Sphinx, remember? I'd have been fine. Besides I don't need the money, nor do I care about the fame. And I didn't even enter the bloody competition, now take the win before I attempt an Imperius on you and make you do it anyway."

She got a mulish look on her face at this, 'she'd have been a bloody stubborn Griffindor I just know it,' and countered with "We share 'ze victory 'zen. 'Ogwarts an' Beauxbaton both win."

Rolling his eyes Harry just agreed with the girl's foolishness.

There was a tug behind the navel.

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"Kill the spare."

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Lens of Sanity

'Mr. Gunner' advised I change the Title and Summary. This is something I totally agree with. Unfortunately I suck at coming up with summaries which make sense... I'll think of a decent name eventually I'm sure. What I was surprised learning was that the man actually read the story because he recognised my Penname, implying that I'm a good enough author to get readers by reputation!

****wide eyed disbelief****

Chapter Six: A Beautiful and Terrible Thing

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With a flick the French woman's platinum blonde hair brushed lightly across the dark haired man's face and he was once again offered a scent which had been growing on him throughout the year, a scent that reminded him of spring days in his youth. Comparing his experience growing up in his relative's dubious care, with that of time spent in Azkaban filled the fourteen year old with an odd sense of nostalgia to be working in light rain tending to his roses. He found it strange that the beauty before him could bring out pleasant memories from a time he always thought of as hell.

"We share 'ze victory 'zen. 'Ogwarts an' Beauxbaton both win." She said in English heavily accented in her native timbre.

'Hmm, she must really be getting worked up about this particular bit of foolishness.' Harry thought in amusement. Raising an eyebrow at her mulish look he acquiesced with a tired "Fine."

Grasping her left hand in his right the two placed their free hands on the angular cup, and for the second time in his eventful life Harry felt the navel hooking sensation which marked Portkey travel. He crashed to the ground as always when experiencing magical forms of transportation and it saved his life, as a spear of crystalline blue rocketed through the place where his chest would otherwise have been.

"Kill the pair!" an aristocratic voice ordered, -although it was misheard by the teen- who rolled to the side and instantly unleashed a swelling mass of Hoarfrost from his Horntail wand. The spell was on the tip of his mind thanks to his recent conversation with the Veela girl.

The mass of frigid magic impacted the unsuspecting Death Eaters who were lined up for an instant victory and so were not expecting to be faced with hastily organised resistance. Flashes and bangs were traded between the two champions and their dark cloaked foes, back to back they covered one another as lances of power crashed into Fleur's powerfully cast golden dome.

"Avada Kedavra" from the dark haired man and a pudgy masked figure took his last breath offered the two with an opening "Get through that door Fleur, my Portkey is not functioning."

European accent strong the blonde sang out the five syllables of a limb severing curse 'Conseco Artus' a bright blue ribbon raced out over her shoulder as the two charged forward, onward through the unknown of this mansion like fortress.

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Some long time later the two champions found themselves at a dead end, the warren of curving and interconnected corridors having gotten them thoroughly lost. There were no windows to be seen and Harry had concluded whatever this place was, it was either built completely underground, or was the colossal basement of some other building.

Taking in his companion's look of focus as she was clearly attempting to think of a way out of her current situation, Harry once more noticed that the woman was well, hot. There was simply no other word for it, messy hair and scrapes really did add to the woman's image "Will you stop looking at me an' 'elp think of a way out of this 'Arry" Fleur demanded shaking him from his thoughts.

As he was about to respond a stabbing pain lanced through his forehead, similar but subtly different from the sensation indicating a changeover, and as Harry's hand raced to his famous scar he changed what he was about to say "He's here, Voldemort-, they've called him."

"Yesss I am here Harry Potter. I do not think you will escape me this time." The bald headed form of Voldemort declared in high pitched sibilant tones following a silent Apparition into the room.

Magic bleeding off the self styled Dark Lord made it clear that he was far out of Harry's league in terms of magical power, green eyes span to face him anyway, cheekily throwing out "I don't know what you're talking about Flighty ma boy. I've successfully killed you three times now, and even dispatched your pet snake back when I was a second year." All the while he was thinking 'Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit! We need to get out of here now. We can't get out of here because

there is a madman standing in front of the only door. Any bright ideas there Harry, besides more taunting I mean?'

Voldemort's eyes predictably narrowed in fury and Harry found himself recovering from an unimaginably powerful Cruciatus Curse to the sight of a softly glowing French girl utilising borderline magics. Forcing himself to his feet through the residual pain he whispered "Pupugi" to let fly his trademark Dragon Slaying Curse, and the effectively transparent piercing magic cut a deep gash through his neck missing the targeted eye at the last instant.

With a roar the twisted man's firing speed went through the roof and the two teenagers fell back on the complete defensive. Harry recognised a portion of the String Voldemort was using as the same one the Champion had used himself following the Second Task. Knowing the moment a churning black red spell was about to be cast, Harry realised that his companion was going to be incinerated and there was no shield he could cast to stop it. And worse, she was barely on her feet in the corner, so he could not tackle her out of its path.

'I need a solid guardian, Need. I want, I need, a solid guardian.' The thought blazed through Harry's mind and he pushed his intent through his magic, draining it brutally. No time to see if it worked Harry dove to close the distance and let fly the pretty, calming green of a Killing Curse, before blacking out to prevent a changeover.

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'This place really should be re-named the Harry Potter Wing of Hogwarts' the exhausted teenager thought sardonically, 'combine my fame with the number of hours I've spent here and I should be able to swing that.'

"Awake again I see Mr. Potter." The school Healer said as though she was in fact expecting to see him following the Third Task.

"Maybe you should start calling me Harry..." a thought occurred to him "...You know Poppy, you must have seen me naked more times than any other woman on earth. Interested in me showing my appreciation for all the care and attention?" he said wiggling his eyebrows.

Shaking her head without answering the school Healer got back to performing the diagnostic charm, and just as Harry noticed her eyes drift to the top right corner of the room he injected "Get your mind out of the gutter woman, you're supposed to be a professional."

She blushed brilliantly at being caught out, and Harry smiled winningly at the woman who he decided was actually looking pretty good for being in her late forties.

While it was clearly the dead of night Harry did not have to wait long before an entourage of people scuttle into the Hospital Wing and he asked anyone and everyone the question he most wanted answered "Well then, what the hell happened this time?"

"It appears as though Voldemort somehow diverted the Portkey which was placed on the Triwizard Cup to take you to Malfoy Manor." Albus eventually answered.

"Malfoy Manor huh? Did I kill the Dark Lord again?"

It was Fleur who answered "Oui. I managed to carry you out of 'ze wards an' back to 'Ogwarts once you fainted."

"I did not faint!" Harry exploded vehemently, "And why didn't you Ennervate me so I could have walked the last path to the castle under my own strength?"

Huffing about ungratefulness she went on "I was about too, only then I decided you would 'ave stunned me and told everyone it was you who did 'ze actual rescuing!"

'Damn, that was actually my first thought, the woman is becoming too good at reading me that's for sure!'

"You did a Full Animal Conjugation... wandlessly. It was great!" Sirius cut in excitedly, "I watched Ms. Delacour's memory in the Pensieve. It looked just like Hagrid's pet Hippogriff Buckbeak, and it kind of dove into this black and red spell."

"Indeed, it appeared to distract Voldemort long enough for you to deliver a Killing Curse." That last said with a disapproving look on his bearded face.

Thinking for a while as the others chatted Harry was beginning to feel the fatigue which accompanied healing once again, "So I'm Four and Oh now, at some point someone is going to have to explain to me what makes this guy the most powerful Dark Lord in history..." eyes drooping from one potion or another, he muttered the last as sleep took him "...he seems kind of a pansy to me."

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Leaning against a solid marble wall the perfect image of an attractive teenage girl, the redhead was studying an eleven inch length of Holly in admiration as 'it' had done many times before. Diagnostic Spells ran on the artefact had shown that there was a good reason the wand was as well matched as the thirteen and a half inch Yew wand the individual was most familiar with. The magical core this wand used was from a Phoenix, a tail feather taken from precisely the same Phoenix as the other, far more familiar wand. Which was a good enough explanation as to the redhead's good fortune as any.

The individual did not have a name. It did however have a purpose. It once had two purposes, but with the death of the Basilisk the only thing left to do was resurrect its master. It was forced to do so a second time as 'its' master had once again gotten himself killed by a teenage boy, requiring 'it' to scrape up dried blood from the floor near where Voldemort had fallen.

The scraped blood was to be used in a rebirth ritual today, as today was three days following a Summer Solstice. And as had it, a hastily constructed Homunculus body had been finished mere minutes previously, allowing the ritual to go ahead once again.

What had the once Ginny Weasley conflicted however, was the certain knowledge that 'it' would have likely stood up much better against the two Champions, than 'its' far more powerful master ostensibly had.

A circumstance which was ridiculous in the extreme.

Watching dispassionately when Lucius Malfoy shuddered as he separated his left hand and dropped it into a large bubbling cauldron, the redhead walked over as 'it' had done three months before and added blood -forcibly taken from Harry Potter during the fight, the

same day, from this very location- into the same cauldron. It clearly spoke the appropriate words and completed the Ritual flawlessly.

The Dark Lord Voldemort -an anagram of his birth name- robed himself and set about creating the specifically requested golden hand for his Inner Circle follower. He then made a grand showing of how vitally important it was to acquire the full wording of a "Prophecy" of all things, which seemingly had been the cause of his first downfall.

The Death Eaters present were all overawed at their Masters capacity for surviving death, and they cheered at their new objective.

The redhead went back to its study of the Holly wand, deep in conflicted thought.

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The end of fourth year had approached and Harry Potter was thinking back over the previous week since his newest kidnapping and the most recent dispatching of his family's murderer. Other than a night spent with Trace as he had been doing intermittently throughout the year, and a more than pleasant meal on the Beauxbatons carriage enjoying a world class serving of salmon in mushroom sauce, his week had been relaxingly uneventful.

The one regret on Harry Potter's mind was that Fleur had gotten to the press before he could, so his whole heroic princess rescuing story had been foiled before he could even get it off the ground.

Looking over at his godson Sirius said "You're thinking about the girl again aren't you?"

"Yeah, can you imagine her face if people start asking her about how brave and heroic I am, while they all think she was yelling 'save me, save me' the whole time. That would have been awesome!"

Hermione interjected "I heard that she's sworn never to set foot outside of France until she is married and has children. You do not make the best impressions on people Harry."

Turning away from the Black Lake Harry said "Come on, let's go get the full story out of Albus. I really shouldn't have put it off until the last day."

The dog animagus followed saying quietly to Harry "Yeah, I for one want to know what happened to Remus."

"You do not know what happened to Remus Lupin?" the Headmaster half questioned, half stated twenty minutes later in his office. The disbelieving question looked as though it has aged the man fifty years.

'This does not sound good,' Harry thought 'it's like he thought we already knew something bad had happened.'

It was actually Hermione who answered in a small voice "Professor Lupin was a Werewolf, and he lost control of his transformation during a full moon at the end of last year. I-, I didn't know he was your friend."

"What do you mean Hermione?" Sirius demanded in a flat voice.

"Professor Snape killed him to save me."

"..." the room was stunned for a moment at this revelation.

"WHAT!" the animagus roared, as he span to leave the room with little doubt as to his destination.

The door back to the hallway slammed shut at Dumbledore's command "This is not the subject I expected to be discussing this evening. I assure you it was not done out of malice, please watch the Pensieve memory and judge for yourself what Remus would have wanted to happen in the situation."

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"I'm still going to kill Snape. What makes you think the memory is even genuine?" Harry's godfather declared yet again after an hour's argument. Harry himself could see both sides. A feral werewolf going berserk around schoolchildren, and if the man was anything like Sirius had attested he would have preferred to be killed rather than pass on his affliction. It could have played out the way

Dumbledore claimed, not everyone got a happy ending unfortunately. Harry knew that in his bones.

"What subject did you anticipate discussing this evening Albus?" the green eyed man enquired, hoping to move beyond the bad news for a while.

Taking the bait with a look of relief mixed with one of trepidation, the aged man said one word "Horcruxes."

"Good, new information, I half expected for you go on about the damned Prophecy Sirius told me about, 'Power to Vanquish the Dark Lord' and all that bollocks."

"Oh, the Prophecy, yes I shall give you the full wording first..." Seeing Harry's rolled eyes the Headmaster continued regardless.

After mulling it over the Harry asked "What's this crazy power I'm supposed to have? No wait, 'Neither can die while the other survives?' So does that mean I am just as immortal as he is?"

"Ye-s," Dumbledore confirmed the second warily "However the method by which Voldemort has attained his immortality leaves you at a distinct disadvantage." Waving for the man to go on Dumbledore complied "Your mother performed a Ritual on you when you were a baby, and I believe a side effect of this Ritual caused Voldemort to unknowingly transfer a small amount of his Soul onto your famous scar. If I am correct in my supposition that tiny piece has entangled -meshed together as it were- with your Soul, rendering you as you say, 'just as immortal as he is.'"

'Okay, now that was not the kind of statement I could have predicted in like a million years.' Harry thought incredulously. Eventually he voiced a conclusion "Those changeover headaches when I use too much magic in one sitting, that's the sliver of the Dark Lord's Soul trying to take me over?"

"Indeed, I was quite confident in my conclusions, however the events following the Second Task were more than confirmation."

A long contemplative silence descended on the room as each became lost in their own thoughts. Hermione having the fastest

moving brain was the first to ask a question "You mentioned a word; Horcrux. What does it mean may I ask?"

"A Horcrux is an item produced by a decidedly Dark Ritual. It involves sacrificing an innocent in order to damage a witch or wizard's Soul. The Ritual uses this damage to slice away a small section and encase it into an object which then becomes known as a Horcrux." Seeing that everyone was following his description Dumbledore continued "And I have reason to believe Voldemort has created more than one."

A few seconds thought and Harry suggested "Ginny Weasley's Diary right? That must be why she's helping him."

"Alas I believe you are correct, the process has doubtlessly killed the poor girl by now. And if your tale at the climax of your second year is true, I believe her body is being used by a sixteen year old Tom Riddle."

Sirius and Hermione came to the same conclusion "So there could be hundreds of these Horcruxes scattered around the world, and they could look like anything and everything?"

Harry laughed, "They won't be old mars bar wrappers and tin cans Hermione. He's a maniac remember, I'd bet you anything he'd put one in the Ministry Atrium or something stupid like that just so he can laugh at everybody."

The Headmaster smiled a little at the phrasing "Yes, I have come to a similar conclusion. I also believe he would be limited in the number of Horcruxes he could make, knowing that the instability in his Soul would kill him if he pushed it too far. As far as I am aware no-one else in history has successfully created more than one."

A while was spent going over the points again and Harry finally just quit "I'm going to bed, I want to spend a while thinking about this... Are you coming to-, urg, damn Fidelius,- stay with us in an unnameable location at some point this summer Hermione?"

At her nod he distractedly swept from the room.

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While Harry was zooming his way back to London on the Hogwarts Express, Sirius was ensconced in Dumbledore's Office arguing himself hoarse. "Why? What in heaven's name could he possibly say to convince you he is anything but a murderous bastard?"

"You saw the Pensieve memory as well as I. It is clear that without his aid Ms. Granger and her associate would have perished." The elder man insisted.

"The man is a master Occlumens, he can alter his recollections you have said so yourself. So that means you believe him for some other reason, tell me why. That bastard has gotten enough of my friends killed as it is and I will not take the risk."

"You are simply going to have to trust me Sirius." They argued on for the longest time, with Sirius doing most of the arguing while Albus stubbornly refused to give away any further information. Eventually the Headmaster managed to get in a change of topic "What plans do you have for this summer, I assume Harry is going to continue practising beneath the wards of the House of Black?"

He looked mulish for an instant thinking on whether he was going to leave the topic of his old friend's demise alone for the moment "Yes we are, and probably research the Horcrux Ritual. You should give us the books you have to save us some time though, because we are going to find out about it regardless as to whether you think it safe knowledge to have."

"I was planning on it Sirius. There is little of value I can teach Harry myself which you could not for the time being, not until he learns more of the basics of magic at any rate. However I would advise you to teach him the Imprimis Patrocinor shield if you know how to produce one."

Thinking the animagus went on "No, I haven't tried to teach him. Why, do you think this is important?"

"It is imperative for him to know this. I will demonstrate, fire a cutting or bludgeoning spell at me." Dumbledore ordered clearly placing his wand on the table. 'Impactus' sent high level blunt force at the man's chest, which detonates quite harmlessly a short distance from him. "You can cast one can you not?"

"A wandless shield, I didn't even know that was possible." Coming back to the earlier question he answered "I am able to cast one, but it takes me almost thirty seconds, so I have never used it in a real fight."

"Understandable, but you know it well enough to teach so that should be enough. Once he can do it with proficiency I would advise Harry to use the same intent wandlessly, this is how I produce the defence. Although it is quite draining I assure you."

Nodding along with this Sirius asked the thing which had been bugging him since he first saw the French girl's memory "How can a person Conjure something as complex as a Hippogriff without a wand Albus?"

"I have a suspicion, nothing more." The old man intimated stroking his long white beard "I do not believe he did. I remember a time in my youth when I accidentally transfigured my brother Aberforth into a goat when he was attempting to steal my hard candy. It was accidental magic of course, but amusing nevertheless, even my mother thought so."

Shaking his head at the ridiculous story he asked "So how did Harry do it then?"

"I believe he must have transfigured an insect or perhaps a rat, which I assume was in the room at the time. An incredible feat given how much you said he struggles in the area, but far from impossible."

The two talked for a while longer, Sirius brought together plans for how they were going to spend the summer, and getting what information he could about what the Order was up to. Eventually deciding he had gotten as much done at Hogwarts as he was going to Sirius got up to leave, still unsure as to whether or not he should kill Snape in cold blood.

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As he walked down the dark path Harry was lost in thought. The Dark Lord was obviously dead set on killing him and Harry really could not condone such a course of action. The man had killed his parents, but then again he had never met his parents so it's not like

it was really all that much of a loss. No, what Harry was annoyed about was that the man keeps trying to kill him now, for no gods damned reason at all.

Stepping into a well recognised alcove he waited for the Enforcer patrolling to pass by him in the corridor.

Harry was tempted to owl Voldemort the full contents of the Prophecy just to make sure the guy knew he was wasting his time. He wouldn't use Hedwig of course, she was much too valuable a friend to risk some head case harming her, but a post owl, why not?

Shrouded in his father's old Invisibility Cloak he continued on his way.

No, apparently the Dark Lord was wasting much effort to break into the Ministry, so he'll just leave it alone. Maybe he would be getting in the way of someone else's plans if he sent a letter to Voldemort. There was that other thing too, apparently Harry was for the most part invincible. And the only real downside was that he could not risk magical exhaustion because it had the high likelihood of him going berserk and killing everyone.

He began travelling down a long-ass flight of stairs.

That's just it though, he had only experienced one changeover and that was only because he didn't know to be wary of it. He had completed a full Tri-Wizard Task, fought his way through a Mansion Fortress, and had successfully killed a Dark Lord without suffering from enough magical exhaustion to become susceptible to the Soul Fragment. Surely that meant that Harry was competent enough not to let it happen, and he could be happy in the knowledge that he was pretty much immortal. Even better, he had been given this great boon without having to perform a dangerous Soul damaging Ritual like the Dark Lord had.

As he arrived at his destination Harry must acknowledge that he was sorely tempted by what was offered by this turn of events.

"Hey Bella, I brought you some more hot chocolate"

"Harryee" she squealed.

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Lens of Sanity

The comment to Poppy Pomfrey is an eye-axis trick and it actually works in real life, try it and then tell the person you're psychic it's awesome.

The possessed Ginny being describes as an 'it' rather than a 'she' was intentional, hope it wasn't too confusing.

Finally, two things happened in this chapter that I think I should bring to your attention:

Dumbledore told Harry the real prophecy because the Blood Protection Guardian died while he was in Azkaban instead of Durzkaban. This way I can write Dumbledore as an actually helpful good guy in the story without my having to change canon too far.

We also have a mystery on our hands; did Snape really kill Remus to save Hermione, or did he Memory Charm Hermione and use his Occlumency skills to provide a fake Pensieve memory?

Twilight Zone Music

Chapter Seven: Is War Always This Much Fun?

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Stepping off the chugging motorbike and allowing the other man to retake the driving position, Harry looked back at his godfather and said "Well, that was an interesting experience."

"Are you sure you want me to just leave you here? You can't even Apparate on your own yet." Sirius replied.

"Yeah, I'll be fine. I've got the portkeys anyway so no problem." The younger stated "And you are going to have to teach me to Apparate soon now that you mention it."

With a nod the man and bike disappeared with a loud crack of Side-Along Apparition which signalled Harry's arrival in a well put together suburban neighbourhood on the outskirts of Oxford. Looking about the obsessively maintained gardens Harry was forcibly reminded of where he grew up, only Hermione's muggle home seemed somehow inherently more pleasant. 'Probably just my imagination' he thought idly.

Passing what looked to Harry like a brand new -and clearly expensive- car without pausing, he hammered on the front door in the sunlight of the early August evening. Harry smirked to himself at what he was about to do, and when the tall imposing figure of Hermione's father dragged open the door he said "Good evening sir, my name is Harry Potter and I have come to violate your daughter. Would it trouble you overmuch to send for her?"

The man was quite literally shocked into silence by this, sheer disbelief that anyone could have said such a thing stupefying the man even more effectively than magic would have been able to. Before Mister Granger could reply his wife appeared behind him and said "You must be Harry, Hermione said you would be visiting."

"Charmed," he said trying for a Lockhart smile once again, -he was still unsure whether or not he could pull it off successfully- taking and kissing the back of her hand like Sirius had taught him he said "I can certainly see why your daughter is so popular, you are simply gorgeous ma'am."

The man's scowl deepened notably but the woman smiled and said "Why don't you come in and have a seat while I fetch her."

"I would love to come in Mrs. Granger." Harry said looking directly at his friend's father. The man did not imagine the emphasis.

Channelling his uncle Vernon's trademark vein throbbing Mr. Granger was not given the opportunity to speak before Harry found himself engulfed in a bone breaking hug. Library enhanced strength really doing a number on his back. 'Most people work out, Hermione fetches tons upon tons of books back and forth from the library,' he thought in amusement.

"Good to see you too. How come you never told me your family drove a Bentley Hermione?" Harry asked smiling.

Hermione in turn smiled at her father and said "You see daddy, I told you that you would like him didn't I? Although I didn't know you were into cars Harry."

The two school friends talked for a while about nothing much and Harry found the older man's restraint quite admirable. Eventually he got on with the reason he was there "Right Hermione," he said handing her a small teacup "...You said you wanted to come to this meeting the Headmaster is setting up. That is a portkey and it should take you directly to where Sirius and I live, at about five to nine understand?" she nodded and he handed the girl a piece of parchment written in Albus's loopy hand. "The building is under a Fidelius, so you have to memorise what is written there and then I need to destroy it."

'The Headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix may be found at number twelve, Grimmauld Place, London.'

"Got it?" at her acknowledgement Harry took the paper and said "Excuse me a moment, I need to use the bathroom." Then stood up, snagged a set of keys with a winged 'B' symbol on them, and headed right out the front door.

The roar of a six litre V8 and the distinctive sound of screeching tires, snapped the two Grangers out of their thoughts. Once they got out front of the house they were met with nothing but skid marks on their

driveway and a four hundred horsepower luxury car vanishing around the corner.

"This. Is. The-, the... Friend, you were telling us about Hermione?" her father asked as Hermione began rubbing her temples.

As she joined the two her mother pitched in with "He seemed quite charming to me. Where did he go?"

"I suppose I shouldn't really be surprised." Hermione stated to her father's angry look "That's just Harry. Some days, most days maybe, he will save your life. But then there are days like today..." she trailed off.

"Days like today? Where he steals my car?"

Turning back to the house she just answered tiredly "Yes. That is a pretty good description actually... Some days he steals your car."

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"You told my father I was the school bike didn't you Harry!" Hermione screamed at him as he stumbled through the front door of Number Twelve a few hours later.

"What makes you think that Hermione?" Harry replied putting on a 'taken aback' posture.

With a further scowl the brunette continued "And what did you do with my father's car? He loves that car you know."

"Actually you should be thanking me for that. That Bentley was a death trap!" Harry insisted "Did you know it had a blind spot, I mean you would think a car like that wouldn't have such a major design flaw would you?"

As she closed her eyes in an attempt to control her temper the girl calmly ordered "Explain."

"Well when I was on the trip back, these two really uncool guys in their stupid flashy lighted car sort of started tailing me. And like I said, the damn thing had a blind spot, it's not like it was entirely my fault it happened."

"What are you saying to me Harry?"

"Well..." At her look he just blurted "I kind of wrapped it around a police car. And then maybe Confounded the muggles. And then sort of ran off." 'Protego!' "Gah, Hermione stop hexing me. I really was going to give it back. It was an accident I swear."

The distinguished members of the Order of the Phoenix began flooding in and entering through the door to the scene of an incapacitated fifteen year old. "Ow-, I'm th-owie Mi-nee!" Harry tried to get out behind comically lengthened teeth, an assortment of other minor hexes, and brutally tight Incarcerous ropes.

It was a full thirty minutes later when the damage and resulting explanations had been dealt with, that everyone had been seated in the kitchen to discuss whatever Albus had called the meeting for. 'That must be Sirius' cousin, Ms. Nymphy Tonks. He said the girl was fond of bright colours.' Harry thought idly as the Headmaster began with inane platitudes.

Looking around as each was introduced Harry only recognised a few of the members. Mr. Weasley was there and who Harry would guess was the man's eldest son, but that was it for the redheads. A rumpled guy smelling strongly of firewhiskey was introduced as Dung Fletcher, which Harry thought appropriate. An attractive woman in her mid thirties named Ms. Vance was standing next to that Professor Moody prick who had been teaching Defence last year, and the guys creepy eye seemed to spend an inordinate amount of time swivelled in his direction. A two fingered salute beneath his sleeve was clearly noticed, cementing in Harry's mind that the old bastard spent his time looking through peoples clothing; pervert.

"So how come Snivellus is part of this organisation, has he not killed enough of us for your liking Albus?" Sirius threw out as soon as the introduction was over. There had been other Order meetings but this was the first Harry had been to, and was the first Snape and Sirius both attended.

Seeing as his godfather was clearly not going to be answered Harry asked "I want to know how that one eyed one legged sociopath can be involved when he's clearly a danger to society."

"Aye, an' you should be in Azkaban where you belong. I can spot a dark wizard a mile away by smell alone, an' you are just no good boy." Moody spat and Harry mulled over whether or not he should ask how a person can spot something by smell.

Regardless, the comments started a long round of bickering, which only ended when Dumbledore fired off one of his patented 'cannon blasts' deafening the room. "Now, if we may get on with the meeting, you can all feel free to come to me in private if you have any further concerns. Severus, would you be so kind as to share with us what Voldemort has been doing since his rebirth."

"There is a Prophecy in the Department of Mysteries with applies to the Dark Lord, and he has become fixated on its contents. He has several plans on to how obtain it, though I admit to not having the full details as he is sharing his thoughts with no-one."

Hearing this Harry thought 'Hmm, I'm glad I never sent that Owl now. I really would have scuppered a number of opportunities.' He asked one of the questions which had been on his mind lately "Any news on his plans for the Prisoners of Azkaban?"

"The Dark Lord has promised that those Death Eaters are to be rewarded for their loyalty." The Potions Professor sneered after a long moment of reflection.

"That's good." Harry stated aloud to himself clearly thinking of Bellatrix before he went on "So your main goal as an organisation is to out the guy to the whole world, and prove that I'm not a big lying Dark Lord like the Prophet is painting me. Is that about right?"

The room sat in contemplation for a while, and then went back to bickering. At the end of the meeting Hermione pulled him aside and said "Harry, I don't think guarding the Hall of Prophecy is a very good idea, but I do have a different one that I think might work."

"Why didn't you say it to the room Hermione?"

"Because I wanted to run it by you first and we are going to need Luna's help."

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Almost a month later found Harry Potter and his good friends Hermione Granger and Luna Lovegood walking down the shopping district Diagon Alley for all the school supplies needed for the upcoming year. The school term started once more in just a few short days and this was the best time to get everything done in one sitting, although on the downside the streets were packed with other shoppers and their parents. A few fearful looks were shot at the "Dark Lord" and his female companions, but that was to be expected thanks to the avalanche of bad press the boy had been forced to deal with.

Suddenly a huge jagged bolt of lightning struck powerfully right in the middle of the street, when the light and smoke cleared a thick stench of ozone hung heavily in the air, and there stood the seven foot, noseless figure of the Dark Lord Voldemort. He was accompanied by a triad of masked Death Eaters, and a fourth which was the clearly unmasked form of one Lucius Malfoy.

"Avast, Harry Potter. My great nemesis. You shall not escape me this time. Ha. Ha. Ha. Haa!" Lord Voldemort cackled beneath a 'Sonus' as the shoppers all took note of what was happening. Many of them took cover, or scattered in flight altogether while the two foes looked one another over with scorn.

Harry turned to his adversary and said "Ah, Voldemort. We meet once again, do you like my boots?" gesturing down to the blue-grey dragon leather accessory.

"Yes-sss of course I do, they scream 'Harry Potter: Dragon Slayer.' But now is not the time, for we must duel. Is that not right Lucius-sss Malfoy?" Voldemort said dropping off into Parseltongue for the ess's.

The two traded tremendous blows back and forth, big bright flashes of light and an immense conclave of energy that was bleeding off the Dark Lord made the duel one for the history books. The First Battle of Diagon Alley it would eventually be named, the opening battle in Voldemort's second war.

"Crucio"

Luna Lovegood went down in agonised screaming and Harry from his knees shouted a big "Nooooo!"

"I'll get you my pretty, and your little dog too!" The Dark Lord taunted to his disheartened opponent.

Just when things looked to be at their worst a powerful beard stepped into the middle of the battle, protecting the injured Luna and the exhausted Harry. "You cannot hope to win Tom, the light side is more powerful than you can possibly imagine. And Lucius, I cannot say I am surprised to see you here today."

With that the aged Headmaster and the feared Dark Lord begin to battle in earnest. An even more impressive duel broke out with two opponents flaring a Visible Aura, and bright flashes, and thunderous bangs were being traded between the two. Eventually the Aurors show up and they witnessed several bone shattering spells harmlessly splash over Voldemort's wandless Imprimis Shield, and they heard the Dark Lord as he intoned a parting message "Avast! You may have won this time Dumbledore, but you cannot stop me forever. For I am invincible, Bwahahaha!"

With that Voldemort and the Death Eaters were gone from Diagon Alley, and the world now knew of the Dark Lord's rebirth.

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"Why did you keep saying Avast! Harry?" Hermione asked him as he set about removing the glamours which were making him look like Voldemort.

The black haired fifteen year old answered with a questioning look "What? Voldemort speaks in a pirate voice doesn't he?"

Hermione face palmed and Harry/Luna answered in Harry's distinctive tone "Not as far as I'm aware Harry. You were supposed to go for a kind of sibilant hiss. Remember?"

"Oh yeah..." Harry said "...Whatever, a pirate voice is close enough. How did your Simulacrum hold up to my Cruciatu Curse Luna?"

"Its toast. I am actually surprised at how good you are at the Torture Curse." Her usual distracted nature of speech was permeating the altered tone.

Harry thought on it a while and intimated "I think about Lucius Malfoy slipping an eleven year old Ginny Weasley the Diary. I kind of really do want him to feel agonising pain. Is that weird?"

"A little, but I suppose that's a better emotion to use than most." Lucius stated as his image returned to the purple haired form of Sirius's cousin from her position between Harry's godfather and the two others who were setting about removing their fake Death Eater garb.

Hermione just let go of any attempt to reason with Harry and instead turned to her other friend "What about you Luna, was it really necessary to talk about his boots?"

"Harry is always going on about his boots, it made it look more authentic."

"You know she's right Hermione. My boots are awesome, of course the Dark Lord would comment on them before a duel." Harry said standing up for the blonde. "Besides, I think Luna does a very good me impression."

With a look to the heavens she replied "You guys are the worst actors in the world. There is no way anyone is going to believe that was really Voldemort, you two totally ruined my perfectly good plan."

"Magical people are idiots Hermione, of course it's going to work. Here, I'll bet you a Galleon tomorrow's Prophet backs me up."

The brunette did not reply.

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Earlier that morning Harry, Hermione, and Luna were manhandling a mannequin up Hogwarts stairs for a scheduled meeting with the Headmaster. It was empty for a while and Hermione spent the waiting time clearly enamoured with Fawkes the Phoenix who was currently in his chickadee form.

When the old man entered Harry didn't hesitate to throw in the reason they asked to meet with him "We've spent most of this month coming up with a way to out your Dark Lord."

"Really? And here I was under the impression that you 'did not wish to involve yourself in the wizarding world's problems.' I believe those were the words you used, were they not?" Dumbledore stroked his beard idly and then offered "Would any of you like some tea?"

After shaking his head Harry transfigured a glass and poured in a vial of Amortentia as the other two took the proffered tea. "I still don't really want anything to do with the whole Voldemort situation. As far as I'm concerned that's got sod all to do with me, but if you had been reading the Prophet about three weeks ago the sheep started going on about throwing me back in Azkaban for Sedition."

"Yes, I am aware of that. Although I am unsure as to whether they would succeed."

"You will forgive me if I assume the worst I'm sure." Harry said flatly with irritated resignation "Anyway, Hermione came up with an idea and after a bit of tweaking we cobbled together a plan. I pose as Voldemort, talk Parsel, and get into a duel with someone Polyjuiced to look like me. We eventually decided that in order to make it more believable I should toss some Unforgivables about as well as go with an escort of Death Eaters."

The old man was thinking this over as he took a drink "Go on."

"You know what a Simulacrum is I am guessing?" Harry asked the Professor.

"A rough statue made of snow, given a heart of stone and treated with ointments not unlike Polyjuice, charged with a person's blood to give it that person's shape and form, then animated with advanced magics."

"And Luna volunteered to play the part of Harry, so we are going to charge this one with her blood." Gesturing to the mannequin the boy looked at the Headmaster directly, offering the full force of his green eyed stare.

"If you have gotten as far as the uncharged form, I would assume you have found the method of creation somewhere in the Black Library, given that a large number of spells necessary for their construction are illegal in this country."

Harry just nodded "We were unable to complete the final three spells, so we need you to do it. And we have another proposition if you agree to help."

"What is this other proposition?"

"We were thinking that you should come and be all 'fire and brimstone' Dumbledore and chase off "Voldemort," but mostly we thought that Snape could betray the plan and cement his loyalty in the Dark Lord's ranks... you were going on about how he hasn't yet proven himself remember? Besides, if Snape makes it seem like he was lucky to hear about my plan, and makes sure to tell his master that it had nothing to do with you it shouldn't matter too much that he gets the information to Voldemort too late for it to make any difference."

After a few more moments in contemplation Albus nodded his assent, and Luna handed the man both necessary books. As he got to work completing her replica Dumbledore commented "I believe Nymphadora would be a good choice in accompanying you thanks to her rather unique talents."

Two and a half hours later Luna activated her Harry!Polyjuice, noting that the concoction turned completely transparent and had absolutely no taste whatsoever.

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"I can't believe Sirius is making me ride the Express again!" Harry said in annoyance on the first of September. Luna was sitting in the same compartment reading a magazine sideways and Harry noticed that the glamour making it look like a Quibbler was not as good as it might have been.

Hermione had been forced to hand over a Galleon when the Prophet predictably went all out proclaiming the second rise of the Dark Lord, and how Harry was now the saviour of the wizarding world again. Lucius Malfoy had actually been arrested, but he was claiming it was a Polyjuice imposter and not really him, so it was doubtful that he would be charged. Not that it would matter overmuch thanks to what happened two days after their little escapade down Diagon Alley.

Harry had actually been incapacitated by his scar breaking open when Voldemort learned about the execution of Hermione's plan. The Dark Lord had been unhappy that his being alive again was now known to the whole world, or maybe it was the laughably obvious way in which it had occurred that upset him. The emotional surge of outrage and fury had actually been strong enough to blast through Harry's Occlumency barriers and knock the boy unconscious. 'Looks like yet another annoying side effect from being a Horcrux' Harry mused idly at this train of thought while trying to scope a glance at Luna's centrefold.

In retaliation for the quote, unquote "Light Side's" move against the Dark Lord, Voldemort had stepped up his plan to deal with Azkaban and two days ago all the Death Eaters who had been calling the castle their home for the past fourteen years had been freed. Including Bellatrix much to Harry's approval, and to everyone else's dismay.

"Do you really have no intension of getting involved in this war Harry?" Hermione asked once she was settled in the compartment.

Once he had pulled his thoughts back to the present he answered "That's right, the sheep are no longer threatening me with prison now that they know the Dark Lord really is alive, so why would I want to get involved? People die in wars you know."

"Voldemort is not going to stop trying to kill you though, you know that."

"Maybe, maybe not." The boy said "Perhaps, once he realises that I don't particularly want to kill him any more he will leave me alone. Besides, the guy is a pushover. I've killed him what? Four times now."

"So you are just going to go to school like a normal teenager?" Hermione asked.

Pondering the question for a moment Harry said "More or less. I'd probably emigrate to France or something if not for Gerard Delacour putting a capture or kill order on me in case I ever set foot in his country."

They talked for a while as the train whisked them toward School and their fifth year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Hermione seemed to get it into her head that Harry was missing Fleur Delacour for some crazy reason, which eventually forced Harry to Silence her and go back to trying to read Luna's dirty magazine over her shoulder.

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Further down the train Draco Malfoy was getting a feeling similar to the jitters one got before an important Quidditch game. That familiar mixture of excitement and nervousness which kept a person worried but at the same time determined not to make a mistake.

He had learned the hard way not to directly provoke Potter, it hadn't taken him too long at the beginning of last year to learn to be wary of him. The casually violent and dismissive nature his nemesis acted toward perceived threats ever since his year in Azkaban was not something to take lightly. Luckily the task he had been given was fairly straightforward, and better yet would not necessitate any contact with the annoying Gryffindor.

He was under a Disillusionment Charm and standing perfectly still so as to remain as invisible as possible in the small nook barely in sight of the boys bathroom. He had been there for over two hours waiting for the opportunity to complete his assignment.

The Dark Lord did not under most circumstances allow people who were still in school to accept tasks, due to his well founded belief that children were unreliable. However once Draco had heard of the mission from his father he had volunteered, knowing as he had his whole life that he would one day join the ranks of the Death Eaters just like his father before him. He believed that successfully completing a mission for the Dark Lord at such a young age would put him on the fast track to the Inner Circle now that his father's master had been reborn.

So when he spied Longbottom moving toward the bathroom Draco whispered four syllables and performed the six wandmotions. One word well drilled over the previous summer, safe beneath the wards of Malfoy Manor:

"Imperio"

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Lens of Sanity

There is a direct quote about Simulacrums taken from Lionheart, credit where credit is due. His description of them being made from snow and so on is better than anything I could come up with :D

Now, does anyone think that Voldemort is kind of a pushover in this story? 'Cos I do! Long story short; I asked my brain to come up with a way to make him a real threat and after I vetoed simply giving him a Worf to kick the crap out of, it came up with something. Downside, Voldemort is now WAY too powerful and I can't even imagine how Harry can actually win at all.

Not a good sign.

Anyone who is arriving late to this party needs to know that I'm pretty much making this up as I go along. I accidentally deleted the first two dozen reviews when attempting to update a while ago so you can't go and check. Basically Luna wasn't in the original version at all until someone asked for her, I didn't have a Fleur pairing in mind, and Harry was meant to have a attitude of dull surprise at everything and looked nothing like he currently does.

As for this chapter I was asked by Mr. GenoBeast to make Rita the insect which may or may not have been wandlessly transfigured, in ChapSix. After like three hours thinking about it I realised that this Harry likes Rita and so all my ideas as to why she could be at Malfoy Manor had to be thrown out... So, I'm sorry, I did try though.

Essentially I'm moulding this based on what reviewers request they want to see. I don't care if you think what you're interested in reading is even possible or not, do you want a time travelling Petunia Dursley armed with a shotgun and bowie knife? Space Vikings? The illuminate? How do you want me to play Snape? Is he good or bad, does he have a TropeCo Evil Hand®? I just don't know.

It's all fair game ladies and gentlemen, just ask and I'll do my best to work it in.

Chapter Eight: Kansas City Shuffle

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It was the fifth of October and the first Hogsmeade weekend. With the rebirth of Voldemort and the war going on, Harry had decided to stick with the Time-Turner and stay on thirty hour days. He had been long used to the altered sleeping schedule anyway so changing it back was not a high priority. Things had been surprisingly tame since the beginning of term, thanks mainly to Harry's insistence that he had no interest in being involved with Dumbledore's war on Voldemort now that he was out in the open. Apparently his disinterest at faceless muggle attacks and the Dark Lord's attention being focused on their ridiculous Prophecy was not quite getting through to Hermione and more surprisingly Sirius.

Harry had after much cajoling, taken the Animagus Revealing Potion despite not really caring to learn how to turn into an animal. This would have been fine if he'd had an awesome form, -Harry had been all but convinced he'd be a Black Panther or a Horntail or something equally cool- but no, his form was not quite that impressive. The upshot being that his godfather had been laughing his arse off and teasing him mercilessly since he had learned of it.

"Damn Sirius." He said as he walked passed a distracted Neville Longbottom on the way toward his destination.

There had predictably been a new Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor at the beginning of the year, but compared to Alastor 'I am completely off my tree' Moody a frog faced spinster was nothing but a pushover. From the looks of things it seemed as though the Ministry had appointed her to mess about with Hogwarts and probably try to kill Harry if the opportunity ever arose, but with the outing of the Dark Lord her primary purposes had been left a little moot.

She had attempted to get him to show up at detentions following the one and only class Harry had attended, but due to his policy of not going to them she had been left disappointed so far. She had even appealed to Headmaster Dumbledore, who had told her that Harry rarely bothers going to class let alone detentions and then proceeded to vanish in a flash of Phoenix fire before she could ask any more questions.

Harry found that story amusing for some reason he could not really put his finger on.

Nevertheless it was due to the esteemed Dolores Jane Umbridge - ridiculous name by the way- that Harry was on his way out of Hogwarts and toward today's meeting. The woman had cornered him and told him of the new Minister, a man named Rufus Scrimgeour, had wanted to meet with Harry and perhaps speak to the press. From Sirius' comments, the Aunt of one of the pretty Hufflepuffs in Harry's year, was the current Director of Magical Law Enforcement. And she had turned down the top job allowing a far less competent candidate to become Minister.

Harry liked the idea of meeting with him. Talking to the press side by side with the Minister of Magic would be just the kind of thing a heroic young world saviour type such as Harry should be doing.

It was his duty after all.

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"May I introduce to you all Harry Potter." The man had streaks of grey in his mane of tawny hair, and the yellowish eyes behind a pair of wire-rimmed spectacles were calculating, betraying the smile on his face as a fake. The kind of obsequious smile which was always pasted on a career politician's face.

The man had no idea who he was dealing with.

Harry flicked open his designer Hack Sunglasses and placed them on his face confidently, shading his eyes from the glare of a noonday's sunlight. Acromantula carapace armguards and signature Dragon Leather boots gracing his form stood out against the formal attire, and he released the previous summer's well practiced Visible Aura.

Harry strode up to the podium to the distinctive opening bars of George Thorogood and The Destroyers playing 'Bad To The Bone', a song stolen the previous evening from Sirius' vinyl record collection.

The press had no idea who they were dealing with either.

"Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen." He whispered, relying on a subtle magical amplification to make himself heard by all those present.

The first to get over the entrance was Bella's old roommate the Prophet's highest paid, and so she got out the opening question "Harry, they are calling you the Chosen One. Is it true you are the only one who can defeat He-Who-Must-Now-Be-Named?"

"Well let me just say 'the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...' A Prophecy such as that sounds pretty clear. Would you not agree Rita?" He answered with a winning smile.

"So it is true?" Another reporter exploded, and all those listening in over the Wireless held their breath. This was turning out to be a far more interesting broadcast than the expected political rhetoric.

Scrimgeour moved in to answer this one "Of course, and together the new Ministry will do everything in its power to help young Harry do his duty."

Another smile and a more intense flaring of his Aura retuned attention to the young man. "Interestingly enough, I have no desire whatsoever to help your pathetic nation. You people threw me into Azkaban for attempting to save a young girl's life, and as of two months ago I was to be returned to my cell for Sedition of all things."

An echoing quiet greets these words.

"That is right, you all have cured me of my desire to save people I do not know personally. I am going to allow Flighty and his Shiny Hand Gang to kill you all and probably turn the country into his own private Dictatorship. That is unless..."

More quiet.

Eventually one of the shocked audience shouts "Unless what?"

"That's just it. I do not know. But I think it's about time you all start thinking about what you can do for me. What does Harry Potter want,

what does Harry Potter deserve, what are you willing to give Harry Potter for him to even want to save your very lives?"

With that he gave his best Lockhart smile, span off a fine gray mist wandlessly, and vanished with a near inaudible crack or Apparition.

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"Interesting press conference Harry." The blonde said distractedly leaning against the corridor wall with a folded piece of parchment grasped in her hands.

"Yeah well, I thought so too. Bloody hate the sheep you know?" He muttered looking over to her. "What's that you've got there Luna?"

"You gave me it a few moments ago and asked me to deliver it to you when you showed up here. And here you are, so please accept this parchment. Did I deliver it well Harry?"

"I gave it to you?"

"Yes."

"Polyjuice again?"

"I do not think so. What does it say?"

Harry unfolded the parchment and read three Polyjuice imposter questions before concluding that he really had written to himself. Scanning down to the actual message he read:

'You can get to Bella if you move right now. She will be at the Hall of Prophecy at eleven forty five.'

"Tempus" 13:34

"Fuck!" Harry spat loudly "I've got to go Luna, I only have two hours left today and I have less than no time."

"I'm coming with you." She said looking him directly in the eye "And you have said so yourself that you have no time, so you have no time to argue either."

"Gah! Double Fuck!" He just grabbed the cherubic girl forcing their hips together and wrapped the Time-Turner around their necks.

As they reappeared across the sands of time Harry bolted straight for Minerva McGonagall's office, Luna not far behind. Harry didn't pause as he sent a 'Stupefy' at the Transfiguration Professor and charged directly to her floo connection and bellowed "Ministry Atrium" before vanishing in a wash of green flames.

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An Imperiused Neville Longbottom was climbing toward the Hall of Prophecy, and he easily bypassed a Bill Weasley as they were both shrouded in an Invisibility Cloak. At that exact same moment the first Harry Potter was meeting Rufus Scrimgeour for the first time to discuss the upcoming press conference. And also at the same time the second Harry Potter was charging through the weekend staff who were milling about the Ministry of Magic.

It was also at the same instant a man once named Tom Marvolo Riddle, who had since taken on the pseudonym of Lord Voldemort was concealed from sight using his impressive skill at Invisibility. A branch of magic similar but totally unrelated to the Disillusionment Charm, which allowed one to be totally concealed from sight without the latter's propensity for a shimmering effect which gave away ones location.

He was making his way through the halls of the first place he had ever thought of as Home, a building which was his by right of birth and blood; Hogwarts Castle, formally known as Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Reclaiming his Relic of Ravenclaw from the hidden room took the most powerful wizard in the world no effort at all, and claiming the famed Relic of Gryffindor from the Headmasters office took scantily more trouble either.

The Sword he had seen the boy wield through the memory of the First Task was exquisite, a masterpiece of Goblin magic. From what the waif had told him he knew that the Sword could be Summoned using the old Sorting Hat. So following his plan Voldemort unleashed a well controlled burst of Fiendfyre at the artefact before sweeping

from the room. Dumbledore would not be distracted long, and facing the old man in his stronghold was not the order of the day.

Voldemort felt one of his Death Eaters summoning him, and decided this brief stay in his old home was to be cut unfortunately short.

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"Weasley!" Harry snapped closing on the eldest brother "Get the Order here right now there is going to be an attack."

The man removed his hood and looked startled that he'd been spotted, though Harry in no way intended to share with him how it was his smell which alerted him to the older man's presence. Harry and Luna pushed passed him without checking to see if he complied and headed for a room with a number of doors.

"Any idea's Luna?" He asked abruptly.

Pondering, the blonde replied "My mum used to work here but I don't know. Maybe if we just ask?"

"I want the room with the Prophecies please!" Harry requested with a shrug. Surprisingly enough the front door locked itself and the gateways span to accommodate his command. "Huh, I can't believe that worked."

Towering shelves of spheres were on all sides and neither knew where they were supposed to go, 'Damn it, we've got less than two minutes' the green eyed man thought furiously as he searched.

"The Prophecies appear to be sorted by the date they were made. When was yours first spoken Harry?"

As he thought the man answered "Er-, I think it was the middle of 1979. Around then at least maybe." She grabbed his hand and a short time later they came across Neville Longbottom of all people, and he already had his hands on a small spun-glass orb.

Throwing subtlety aside Harry shot off a 'Stupefy' without second thought and his companion attempted an 'Accio' to get at it quickly.

Both failed as the boy erected a wobbly 'Protego' shield charm, just as twenty witches and wizards in Death Eater garb stepped into view.

"Fuck, Again!" Brushing off Sirius' favourite spell Harry unloaded a second Stunning spell, but this time with what his godfather called a 'Bletchly Twist' and the bolt of red energy crashed right through both Lucius Malfoy's powerful shield, and Longbottom's indistinct protection. Incidentally dropping him like a stone.

Luna had the presence of mind to use a Summoning Charm again, grabbing the orb without comment and Harry turned to the Death Eaters "What are you idiot's doing here?"

"Potter, give us the Prophecy and we will let you go" The light haired aristocrat said with scorn.

Looking over at the man's gloved hand Harry commented "I'm sure there are many people who would give their left arm to be in your position Lucius. But I do not think you are in a position to negotiate. You are a peon, just another of your master's little toys."

This resulted in a widespread bristling among the cloaked figures, but with their objective being held at wandpoint by Luna they dared not attack.

"Potter, y-"

"Call him. I want to make a deal."

"What?"

"I said call your half-blood sack of snake remains. I have something he wants..." Harry gestured to the object in Luna's hand with a tilt of his head "...and he has something I want. Call him NOW!"

They obeyed. Proving they were at the very least capable of following simple instructions.

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Lord Voldemort swept into a most curious scene.

In a large clearing between the stacks in the Hall of Prophecy his Death Eaters were standing -wands drawn- on one side of the clearing, and a large crew of the Order of the Phoenix were standing -wands also drawn- on the other side.

Yet nobody was fighting.

Standing with a relaxed and somehow insolent slouch, the boy and a small blond girl were right in the middle. No man's land. Preventing any fighting from breaking out by sheer presence alone.

"Good Afternoon." The boy nodded politely, "How had your day been thus far Lord Voldemort?"

Somehow this was asked in a way that was clearly not mocking.

"It has been quite well Harry Potter, although I admit to having expecting the child of Frank Longbottom to have been more successful than it seems he has been."

Some of the Order members were losing their confidence now that the Dark Lord was here in person, and the Death Eaters were similarly given a boost to their moral. They would find out later that the reason the Department of Magical Law Enforcement was in no way involved was because of a massive attack on Upper Flagley, a small part-wizarding village in South Yorkshire. With Dumbledore assisting this left the three dozen or so combatants quite alone for a bit of a Parley.

"I personally think this thing is a load of crap." The boy said, once more gesturing to the precious orb, "But then again, you might be interested in its contents saying as I already know what it says."

"I see." Voldemort said mostly to himself "Would I be right in assuming you want safe passage out of your current situation."

Frowning Potter said "Erm-, no not really. I can kill you fairly easily, I think we have established that enough times don't you?" The barely human form of Voldemort was of course about to violently protest at this flippant remark, when the blond child made it clear that the Prophecy would not survive an attack by showing the menacing glow of her wand tip.

"Then what is it you want Harry Potter. We do not have to be adversaries, I once offered you an honoured place by my side and you turned me down if you recall."

"I was eleven!" Potter exploded "Of course I was going to turn you down. Your whole 'there is no good and evil only power' speech was never going to work on a kid who still believed in all that crap."

It was the Dark Lord's turn to think on this statement, and he eventually asked "So you are offering to join me now?"

"I can't. When you hear the Prophecy you will understand why." The boy responded with a sigh.

"Then I shall ask one final time. What is it you do want Harry Potter?"

"Bellatrix."

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"Bellatrix." Harry said, thinking how he was getting tired of this pointless back and forth. "I want Bellatrix. You can have the Prophecy, I'll even give you safe passage out of here if you so desire it."

Harry watched as the red eyed stare shift to his once most loyal servant. It was clear to anyone watching that the woman really did not want to be where she was. She was shifting foot to foot, looking monstrously uncomfortable, and attempting to avoid everybody's eyes. Harry had noticed it during the wait that the woman had been throwing occasional glances at him when she thought none of the other Death Eaters were looking.

So when the Dark Lord did not immediately reply Harry went on "When I say I want her, I mean I want Sovereignty over her Dark Mark too. I did quite a bit of research when I got out of Azkaban, and I am confident you have the necessary skill to accomplish this. I want her back but I will not allow you any lingering control over her."

The man was thinking for a long time and Harry could tell the exact moment Voldemort began contemplating how to accomplish the magic necessary to do as he requested. When Harry noticed this he

threw in "I would swear an Unbreakable Vow that the Prophecy contains a piece of information you do not have, and goes to explain why I didn't die in 1981."

"Agreed." Voldemort said as he staked over to Bellatrix and pulled violently on her emaciated left arm. As he waved his Yew and Phoenix wand Harry heard a soft chanting which he believed to be a mixture of spells mostly in Parsel, although he could not hear it clearly enough to understand the words.

Three tense minutes later Bellatrix let out a loud "Squee" and ran over like an overly enthusiastic little girl and jumped into a smiling Harry's arms, finding herself lifted into a piggyback.

"Let me see Bella." He asked and the woman showed him her left arm. The Skull and Snake of the Voldemort's Dark Mark ripped before their eyes at the initial skin contact between Harry and Bellatrix, after a few moments the tattoo's Soul Magic shifted and her forearm was now embossed with a tiny Griffon, impeccably detailed in all of its rampant glory.

At the sight Harry smiled and near silently whispered "Target Rodolphus" to his new companion, and then more loudly ordered Luna to toss over the Prophecy.

"Now!" Harry shouted as the spun-glass ball was still in the air, and the two unleashed the pleasing green of the Killing Curse a fraction of a second before Luna added her own.

Both Harry and Bella's bellowed "Avada Kedavra" smacked uselessly against a professionally conjured solid shield, but just as Redolphus LeStrange began charging his own curse with a smirk, the cherubic blonde got him in the toe and the hateful rapist fell, dead away with his final smirk still gracing his face.

'Much cleaner than divorce.' The thought lanced right through Harry's mind before he could stop the callous notion from presenting itself, and he was forced to intone "Imprimis Patrocinor" before his blonde friend got fried by what he would tentatively describe as Devil's Fire sent forth by the Dark Lord now he had the Prophecy safely grasped in his left hand.

A thick blue shield of magic coalesced in front of Luna Lovegood and took the powerful spell effortlessly.

Bedlam broke out as Harry piggybacked his friend and attempted to get out of the centre of a fire fight. One of the Death Eaters took the opportunity to slice poor Longbottom with a butchering curse and the boy did not even have a chance saying as he had already been stunned.

The Order of the Phoenix paired off with one another, doing their best not to get overwhelmed by the superior numbers and Harry realised that with Voldemort himself here, pretty much all of them were going to die. "Fuck again! Bella get down and keep the Death Eater's distracted if you can. Do not get hurt!" Then he whispered 'Sonus' and bellowed "Everyone! On three ignore defence and volley on Voldemort with your best Hex!"

"THREE!"

A number of Killing Curses, flame spells, and assorted dubious magics all combined on a single position smashing through a triple shield; a sandwiched solid barrier between two strong mage shields. 'Bloody hell, there is no way anyone could cast such balls difficult spells like that so fast!' Harry thought as he watched the thing degrade regardless at the huge volley or hexes.

Sixteen powerful spells were enough to once again dispatch the Dark Lord and Harry had the sneaking suspicion it was Luna's 'Avada Kedavra' which had actually gotten through.

The victory was not without cost however. Letting go of all pretence of defence had allowed the cloaked figures to land a fair few curses of their own and more than just Sirius' cousin was down; with the purple haired girl spewing up what was almost certainly her own intestines.

Harry sent Bellatrix over to save the girl and linked up with his blonde friend once again in an attempt to harass their retreating foes. Spying Mad-Eye Moody getting close and personal with one of the masked figures, Harry looped a slashing spiral and as he jabbed let out a whispered "Pupugi" firing into the melee being something which Sirius was forever telling him not to do for some reason.

At the last instant the one legged man ducked to the floor and the high level piercing curse took his opponent in the shoulder.

With a grin and a mocking bow Harry moved off, extracting his friends from the fighting.

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By that evening the dust had for the most part cleared. Bellatrix was in the Harry Potter Wing of Hogwarts dosed with Dreamless Sleep Potion and being treated by Poppy Pomfrey, who was visibly surprised that Harry himself did not need treatment. Bella was in pretty bad shape, most of it was from her long incarceration at Azkaban Prison and the Dementors. Most of it but not all. It took a little bit of convincing for her to get any treatment at all saying as Harry was pretty much her only advocate, and it was her altered Dark Mark which finally persuaded Albus to allow her to stay in the Castle.

Dumbledore was not entirely pleased with Harry as it turned out. Apparently holding the country to ransom was not a suitably heroic thing to do from his perspective, but with his actions at the Hall of Prophecy having succeeded in killing Voldemort again, and most likely saving many of the Order's lives the old man was in a forgiving mood.

Eight Phoenixes had actually died of their injuries, though Harry was quite pleased that Tonksy was not one of them. Harry rubbed his sternum at the memory of her breaking it during the summer, back when he was sternly refusing to call her anything but her hated first name.

Only three Death Eaters lost their lives in the fighting, -Redolphus LeStrange being the only one from the Inner Circle- and the rest had taken the body of their Lord with them when they retreated. The absence of the Sword of Griffindor as well as the destruction of the Sorting Hat had been noted, and a large number of Howlers had been prevented from reaching Harry, but other than those relatively minor problems the day had ended without further drama.

It was early Sunday morning when Harry decided to take a stroll down to Hogsmeade for no other reason than to get out of the

Castle for a while and relax, when a bright bolt of red impacted his back and everything went dark.

He awoke several hours later and wondered just how many times one person can get kidnapped in a single lifetime before he reached his maximum quoter.

Harry Potter found himself looking down a familiar length of Holly, one he knew to be exactly eleven inches in length, and contained a single feather once belonging to a Phoenix named Fawkes. Things really could have been going better, but then again, this was pretty standard as far as his life went, par for the course and all that jazz. What was being tied to a chair with his own Ollivander wand pointed at him, when stacked up to all the other enjoyable goings on that had happened over the past few years, hell the whole of his life?

"..."

"We don't have time for another flashback Harry."

"Sorry Gin. I had a little Déjà vu for a moment there."

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Lens of Sanity

Okay so just to be clear, the following was Voldemort's successful Kansas City Shuffle in this chapter:

He knew Harry was setting up a press conference on the first Hogsmeade weekend and that it would be a big distraction for the masses. He then sent a massive force of Death Eaters to attack the part wizarding village of Upper Flagley which distracted the MLE and Dumbledore. He used these distractions to send Neville under the Imperius Curse to retrieve the Prophecy (which Neville can do by the way), and at the same time fulfilled his real objective; which was to steal the Sword of Griffindor.

Chapter Nine: The Riddle of Riddle

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'That is it, I quit!' The redhead thought to itself resolutely. Pettegrew had come in hefting the corpse of Voldemort through the antechamber of what was currently their primary fortification. It was bad enough that the Master had decided to make the Manor House of his muggle father the central hub of his organisation, but from the obvious deadness of his latest body it did not take a genius to figure out what had probably happened.

This was something which had been eating at 'it' ever since the spring solstice and the Master's first two rebirths. He was clearly in command of immensely powerful magic, and had equally formidable skill when utilising it. So how in the name of Circe herself could the man keep getting himself killed? It made no sense at all.

The Master had possessed a woman by the name of Bertha Jorkins when she was travelling through the Grey Lady's Forest in Albania, had travelled back to Britain, and had liberated a loyal Death Eater who was being held captive by his father. The redhead had been aiding its Master since six months before his rebirth, when 'it' had meticulously tracked him back to Hangleton and then set about helping.

The Master's initial plan was to kidnap his most dangerous foe and use him in the optimal rebirth ritual, and as a show of his grandiose power had decided to do so right in the middle on an international event. This made sense in a way, however the redhead had convinced 'its' Master that gaining a new powerful body should be the primary priority, and that making his enemies once more cower in fear should be secondary to this goal.

The Master had seen reason at the time and they had gone for a simpler capture which had resulted in the boy, Harry Potter, killing him mere minutes after the first rebirth. And it had seemingly been done without any apparent effort on the boy's part.

It knew a fair number of things about this Boy-Who-Lived from the waif 'it' had, for wont of a better word, eaten. Taking in the facts alone was troubling enough; the boy had dispatched Slytherin's

Basilisk, survived Azkaban with little if any lasting harm, killed a Dragon, and slain Lord Voldemort on numerous occasions.

Also, the Ollivander wand which chose him had the exact same wand core as the one 'it' remembered obtaining from the old man back in another lifetime.

It was that last which had perked the redhead's interest the most. More than all the others combined even.

Yet the enchantments on 'its' Diary were still in effect for the most part and 'it' had been aiding the Master as it could. Voldemort's initial plan to obtain the Prophecy had been less than inspired, and the redhead had discovered his large bottle of 'Bahl's Stupefaction' which it had managed to convince the Master to give up for the time being. That last success had caused the Master to then reorganise his priorities and so Voldemort had decided on today's course of action. It had been as much of a turnaround as when 'it' had convinced the Master against using a living being as a Horcrux, besides the fact that 'it' got along quite well with the snake.

The Scion of Malfoy must have agreed to yet another fast track to the Inner Circle as his body was now walking around with malevolent red eyes and the clear indication of willing possession. The redhead concluded that the Master must have decided on once more waiting for an equinox before regaining a new body, and so had taken to using a child Death Eater as a surrogate body. If the boy was strong enough he may even survive the two and a half months playing host to the Master, not that the redhead was particularly concerned either way now that 'it' had come to a decision.

It took the Yew wand from the deceased form of Voldemort's latest body and returned the large green bottle of 'Bahl's Stupefaction' before heading directly out the front door of the Riddle Manor. It was unmistakably followed by a beautiful twelve foot viper named Nagini. Twenty minutes later 'it' was in possession of the one Horcrux whose location 'it' knew, the Family Ring which proved direct decent from the Slytherin line now took pride of place on 'its' slender feminine hand.

With a muted crack of Disapparation 'it' vanished, shrouded in well crafted Illusion.

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From his bound position Harry looked as best as he could around the darkened room, he noticed a huge venomous snake which seemed to be refraining from taking, bare walls, and of course a crimson haired teenager with all the right kinds of curves pointing his Holly wand at him.

He had been lost in thought for a moment and eventually threw out a simple "Sorry Gin. I had a little Déjà vu for a moment there."

"Not at all Harry. I was hoping we could talk for a while if that is okay with you."

"Talk. Yeah, I love talk. Talk is definitely better than torture any day of the week." He said while attempting to wandlessly free himself from the ropes and hopefully attack the girl.

Sighing, the girl summoned a handful of dust and effortlessly transfigured it into a comfortable chair. "I am really not here to harm you Harry."

He smiled winningly and said "Of course you're not Ginny, you are here to return my wand aren't you." All the while forcing as much magic as possible into the air and hoping to spear the girl with some more wandless transfiguration.

"Yes, I am here to give you back your wand. Now please stop trying to kill me, I really only wish to talk."

"I'm not trying to kill you Gin." Forcing the intent 'Die! Die! Die! ...why won't you just die damn it!' through his magic unsuccessfully.

Rolling her pretty brown eyes the girl said "You know, you really are very talented at wandless magic. It is taking me tremendous effort to prevent whatever you are trying to achieve, and that is with a well suited wand pointed at you."

"Fine, what do you want to talk about?" Harry grudgingly asked once a brutal changeover headache threatened to cut short their discussion, and so he decided to give up for a while.

The girl let out a long breath and seemed to get a little uncomfortable. "I want to switch sides. I think you are going to win Harry, and if what I heard about Bellatrix is true then I might actually have a solid way out of the fool's ranks."

"What?"

"Voldemort. He's insane. I don't want to serve him anymore."

"What?" Harry said again before pausing to think. Eventually he asked "Are you not his Horcrux though? I would have thought you'd naturally be on his side."

She looked up at the dusty ceiling for a moment and replied "He is nothing like I thought I would be when I was seventeen. He Cruciates his servants, he was addicted to a powerful narcotic, and his plans made no sense to me. The only reason he has been as successful as he has is because I've been helping him."

"So you are on his side then. If you were helping him you must agree with his aims."

"My Diary was the second Horcrux I created. Or I suppose he created, it is strange because I remember doing it. As well as remembering everything that happened to me up until the Diary was completed, just before graduation in 1945."

"Wait. According to what Albus told me you created the Diary first. It was after you murdered Mrytle in your fifth year, and you created the second after you killed your grandparents."

"Arg!" The girl growled "No. Just be quiet and listen. The poor Ravenclaw girl was an accident, and despite what the Maste-Gah, Voldemort. Despite what Voldemort told you in the Hangleton graveyard I did not murder my father or my grandparents."

"I believe you." Harry nodded carefully "Now you can let me go and we can all be one big happy family."

The redhead scowled "I am telling you the truth."

"Oh, I know." Harry said soothingly, "I just want us all to be the best of friends."

"Damn it! Stop being so patronising. Bah, if the girl knew you were this infuriating she would not have been anywhere near as infatuated with you!"

Harry couldn't help exploding a laugh "So you remember what it was like growing up as an orphan muggle boy, and growing up as a sweet little pureblood girl. Oh, that's just got to be so awkward."

She scowled prettily again before replying "You are partially right of course. I am not even a female despite this body. I still think of myself as Tom Riddle."

Harry scanned his mind back and came to a conclusion "Tamsyn is the feminine of Thomas I think. So you're Tam Riddle now." At the redheads look Harry burst out laughing again despite still being tied to a chair and at the man's mercy.

"I will no-"

"Finish your story Tam. I'm in a much better mood now. You were saying how you are a nice well rounded orphan who totally didn't murder his only remaining family."

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"I was on the trail of the Chamber of Secrets ever since the Sorting Hat whispered of its existence to me during my first day at Hogwarts." At Harry's look Tam replied to the unasked question "I think it whispers in Parseltongue to every student sorted into Slytherin. Regardless, I found the legendary chamber in the first term of my fifth year, and decided to smuggle out the Basilisk so that I could share my find with the world without the authorities killing her."

"It was a female?" Harry asked surprised.

"Yes, but that does not matter now because you killed her. Regardless, I waited until the end of the year and for some unlucky reason the Ravenclaw girl was in the bathroom at three in the morning and ended up getting hit full in the face with the Basilisk's stare."

The dark haired boy injected "And you blamed Hagrid, getting him expelled the same year his dad died!"

"Fine, that is also true. I visited my mother's family that summer and was... unimpressed by what I found."

"And you murdered your father and grandparents, and Memory Charmed your Uncle Morfin into thinking he did it."

"No I did not!" Tam protested.

"Yes you did, I saw the Pensieve memory. You stole the guy's only possession and had him shipped off to Azkaban."

"I did not! Well, I did steal his Ring I suppose. But it was Morfin who went berserk and murdered my muggle relatives. Let me ask you this, would the Trace not have caught me performing a Memory Charm?"

Harry thought on this for a while. The wand would have the tracker on it and he would not have been able to use Morfin's because the Ministry had checked with 'Prior Incantato' and they found only Killing Curses "You were in a wizard's house and could have been using a spare wand. They would not have been able to catch you."

Tam just moved on without bothering to argue "This was in 1943 by the way and the war with Grindelwald was dragging on and getting a large number of good people killed. I had been studying the Horcrux Ritual extensively during my fifth year and went to Horace Slughorn for his opinion as to what would happen if I used a lesser fraction than half my "Soul" when creating one."

"So you were okay with killing people to do a disgusting Ritual even at the age of fifteen?" Harry slowly confirmed.

Frowning the redhead answered "I'd already killed someone remember; Myrtle. I wanted to actually get something useful out of her tragic death."

"Stop!" Harry shouted.

"What?"

"Impossible! I've read the Horcrux Ritual. Humans are born with an innate 'flinching' response when it comes to intentionally murdering others. It is a natural part which has evolved for thousands of years as far as I can tell, and the Horcrux Ritual requires you to purposely go against that emotion, in order to harm your "Soul" enough to create an Anchor." Harry took a deep breath "Claiming you used an accidental death makes no sense, it simply would not work. You are lying!"

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"...You are lying!" Harry intoned forcefully, once more forgetting he was a captive.

"I really need a drink" Tam said rubbing her palms against her eyes "I am not lying Harry. As far as I know I am the only one who has ever thought to use smaller fractions, and furthermore I believe I know more about the process than anyone who has ever lived." She looked directly into the eyes of her bound companion then said "I did in fact use the girl's accidental death. It took a fair degree of mediation and so forth, thinking on what it meant that I had caused a death. And by the winter of my sixth year I had succeeded in turning my mother's Family Ring into my first Horcrux."

"Say I believe you. Why did you even need one? The risks involved in making a Horcrux are huge." Harry asked.

She snorted "I wanted to kill Grindelwald."

"At sixteen? That was pretty fucking ambitious of you."

"I was in Slytherin House remember. Besides you have killed a Dark Lord and you are not even sixteen yet."

"Yeah I have, but I'm Harry Potter. I'm awesome!" She rolled her eyes "Get on with it, I might as well hear the rest of your fantastical tale even if I don't believe a word of it."

"You lose something when you create a Horcrux. A facet of your personality I think. It does not say so in the texts, but that is what I found from going through the process. The Ring contained the most complete imprint of Tom Riddle's original personality, and I have concluded creating it stripped Voldemort of any lasting fondness he

had for muggles or muggle culture. Up until that point he had no real hatred of them in general terms, and the idea of creating an object which would terrorise Hogwarts using the Basilisk had not even occurred to him. As far as I can tell the Diary was made to ingratiate himself with the Purebloods, which would undoubtedly have helped on Voldemort's own rise to power."

Harry thought this was getting far too confusing and injected "You say you know everything Voldemort knew up until just before Graduation, and yet you don't know his motivations for creating the Diary. What you are claiming is contradictory and does not make any sense."

Tam ignored him in favour of continuing her story "The Diary seems to have consumed Voldemort's desire for family, which I suppose is fitting as he had decided on making the second Horcrux around the time he found out that his only family were either dead or in Azkaban. After I took over the Weasley girl I did what I was commanded too, and once you destroyed the Basilisk I had only one more purpose, so I abandoned the book... and in doing so, I sort of killed her.

When I restored Voldemort to a body I was doing so following the orders which were imbedded in the book, but saying as I no longer had the book, they no longer fully controlled me. I eventually became disillusioned with the man that he had become and decided I wanted a way out. Last night I stole my Family Ring and did something incredibly dangerous and foolish; I reabsorbed the other shard of Soul even though doing so had a good chance of ending my, life? existence? Whatever it is I have." Tam blinked a few times in thinking about the pain, no grief she had gone through the night before. Eventually she looked over at what she had concluded was pretty much her only hope.

"Are you going to untie me now?" Harry asked.

Tam Riddle was silent for the longest time. Finally she flicked her Yew wand releasing the ropes and chucked Harry his Holly and Phoenix Feather.

"Avada Kedavra" Green eyes locked on as the spell was shouted.

A sad brown gaze did not even look surprised "Expelliarmus"

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A jet of green light issued from Harry's wand just as a jet of red light blasted from Tamsyn's. The two powerful forces of magic met in midair and suddenly Harry's wand was vibrating as though powered by Duracell AA batteries. Harry's hand seized up around it and he couldn't have released it if he'd wanted to as a narrow beam of light connected the two wands. It was neither red nor green, but a bright, deep gold. Harry, following the beam with his astonished gaze, saw that Tam's long supple fingers too were gripping a wand that was shaking and vibrating.

She did not look taken aback, not in the least.

As Harry's feet felt as though they were about to be lifted off the ground the connection was broken, and rolling to the side he fired off a powerful 'Confringo' which was met by yet another 'Expelliarmus' to much the same effect.

"Expulso" "Expelliarmus"

"Zbax" "Expelliarmus"

"Pupugi" "Expelliarmus"

"Gods fucking damn it! You've cursed my wand you bastard!" Harry shouted from the floor, as he was forced to stop overpowering his hexes or risk another of those damn changeovers.

Tam actually had the balls to chuckle at his language "I have not cursed your wand Harry."

"Yes you have. Look..."

"Stupefy" "Expelliarmus"

"...See, cursed!"

She sighed and explained "It is not cursed. This is the reason I was so set on helping you rather than just vanishing into obscurity for a while."

"Uh-uh, sure. If it is not cursed, what is going on? 'Crucio'"

"Expelliarmus' Our wands share common wand cores, both taken from Albus Dumbledore's Phoenix Fawkes. When I spoke to Ollivander he told me about the Brother Wand effect before I Obliviated him. And through Legilimency I learned that you already knew of the connection."

Thinking back to when he was eleven Harry remembered the conversation with the creepy man Tam was talking about. So he asked "There is a strange effect? 'Reducto'"

"Expelliarmus' It is called Priori Incantatem, or the Reverse Spell Effect. If we make the two wands fight it will show each of us the last spells the wands have performed. Essentially they cannot be used against one another effectively."

'Hmm, that really is strange.' Harry thought before shouting the incantation for Hoarfrost and once more being shot down with a disarming spell.

"Please stop trying to curse me Harry, if you will notice I have not attempted to attack you even once since I brought you here."

"You said that this was the reason you wanted to switch sides rather than vanish into obscurity?" Harry eventually asked as he cautiously got to his feet.

Careful not to let her guard down, and wary of any wandless attack, Tam explained "Indeed. Our magical core's being so well matched that the two of us essentially share a wand is... intriguing. Magic can be funny like that sometimes, and synchronicities such as you and I being unable to fight with our primary wands is the kind of thing which screams 'Pay Attention; This is Important!'"

"So you are saying that you believe you were sort of Destined to help me defeat Voldemort?" Harry asked in a tone which clearly expressed how dubious he found this idea.

Taking the question seriously she thought for a while and said "I would not have put it in those terms, but I do think the two of us are not meant to fight. And furthermore I feel it is partially my responsibility to rid the world of what my other self became."

"Okay. But you know that I don't really care about fighting him? I even gave a speech yesterday telling the country they could go fuck themselves, and that I'd only help if I got some pretty extensive Hazard Pay out of the deal."

"I did not in fact know of this."

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Later that evening the two were walking side by side on a trip back to Hogwarts Castle, Harry having gotten into an argument with the viper he had learned was named Nagini. Apparently there are a number of swearwords that can only be spoken in Parseltongue and while they do not translate well into English, Harry found himself quite outmatched by the smug little bitch.

"I don't like your snake Tam." Harry informed her with an air that the fact was never going to change.

Shaking her mane of red hair she just said "You started it, it is hardly Nagini's fault that she has had thirty years more time to learn swearwords than you have."

"I wish I could talk to my Owl. Hedwig is one of the cleverest people in the castle, if I could talk to her that would be awesome. At least my familiar is cooler than yours!"

"You think a common Owl is superior to such a majestic animal as my snake?"

"Bah, common my arse. Hedwig is the best." Looking up Harry stated "See? Here she comes now, I bet she knew we were talking about her."

As the Snowy Owl alighted to the raven haired boy's arm she looked imperiously over at her owner's companion. She nodded once which Harry felt was a good sign and then glared down at the snake, which Harry felt was an even better sign.

"What did I tell you, Hedwig knows the score."

Right then the red envelope she was carrying exploded and the air for a mile around was given the pleasure of experiencing the bellowed shouts of both Hermione Granger and Sirius Black.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE PLAINING AT? YOU CANNOT JUST DUMP BELLATRIX LESTRANGE IN THE HOSPITAL WING AND THEN LEAVE THE CASTLE WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE! YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE ALMOST DIED TODAY HARRY POTTER!"

It went on in that vein for a while before vanishing in a puff of smoke. Tamsyn Riddle eventually asked the question "LeStrange? What did you do Harry?"

Harry slowly ran his hand through his hair before he answered.

"I knew I was supposed to be doing something this morning."

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Lens of Sanity

The history of Tom Riddle when he was at school contradicts the tale as it was told by Dumbledore in canon. However it does not contradict what might have potentially happened if Dumbledore was mistaken in his; 'journeying through the murky marshes of memory into thickets of wildest guesswork' Basically I'm saying that it does squeeze through even though I've changed some of the implied dates on the HP-Lexicon.

The idea that Tom Riddle wasn't that bad at school was inspired by what I vaguely remember from a story called 'Fair Trade by BajaB' I read it ages ago, so any flaws in what I wrote are all down to my not doing the appropriate groundwork.

You know how I said I'd finished 'The Dark Lord's Equal', well I had to re-upload ChapFive because I realised I'd missed a quote out. Remember who Neville was married too? It was a kind of reflection of Harry's relationship only it had covetously less drama. Well that, and a few other things were taken from a really well written Clell story called 'the Chance Meeting' and I'd not quoted it anywhere... Soo Now my one good story is finally 100 percent totally finished, and I'm definitely not fiddling with it any more. Probably.

Chapter Ten: Back in Black

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Harry and his companion eventually made their way to the domain of Poppy Pomfrey, finding it looking a lot like the kind of place you would expect a medical wing to look like. Albeit following a particularly long and brutal battle, one where neither side really won, but most of the soldiers had evidently lost. Albus' left arm was even in a sling which Harry guessed was pretty much the worst -none Voldemort- injury the man had sustained in the past couple of decades.

Hermione was glaring at him from her position in one of the beds, leg lifted above her heart and firmly secured, indicating the bones were probably being re-grown with Skele-Gro. He felt a little sympathetic at that, knowing from personal experience that the stuff hurts like crap. Tonksy was not glaring at him, but that was mostly due to the fact she was currently being healed from a spell known as an Eye Exploding Hex. Harry was only able to recognise it because of the potion she was sipping had a very distinctive swirling rainbow look about it.

A fair number of the other beds were also occupied by people injured to a greater or lesser degree and Harry innocently asked "Oh my. What in heaven's name happened here?"

"Your pet psychopath went on a rampage and tried to kill everybody. That is what has happened Harry Potter!" His oldest friend practically screamed at him from her sickbed.

He looked over at pretty innocent Bella, who was quite securely fastened to her own bed, and had a familiar magic limiting choker around her neck. "She wouldn't have done that without a good reason Hermione. What really happened?"

"When Mrs. LeStrange regained consciousness this afternoon she requested your presence." Dumbledore went on in an indecipherable tone "And when informed that you were out of the Castle, she concluded that we had harmed you."

Harry's mind instantly skipped ahead several sentences and he finished "One of you tried to shoot her in the back or something, didn't you?"

"She was becoming quite agitated, it was an obvious solution." Albus continued "Although in hindsight I think that it was a bad decision on Sirius' part."

He added that last when Harry began glaring at him, selling out a comrade in order to neatly shift the ire onto the animagus. Eventually Harry strolled over to Bellatrix and attempted to dispel the ropes. The damn things looked like a pale green fire whip about the size of a man's wrist and were clearly strong enough to moor a cruise liner to a harbour in high seas. After several failed cutting curses Harry gave up and used the one spell which he knew would break through the magical bindings; 'Avada Keda-'

'Expelliarmus' Tam screamed once more linking the brother wands with golden light. "Stop, Harry. Just stop."

"What do you want now woman?" He demanded with another glare.

She just looked over at him and stated "That is a binding of the highest order. If you use a Killing Curse the magic will cascade and probably explode, killing us all."

"Can you cancel the spell?" Harry asked putting up his wand.

When Tam was sure the danger had passed she said "Yes."

After a long time Harry realised she had answered the question, and only the question. "Will you cancel the spell?"

"I am not sure I should. I know what she is as well as you do. I do not know if it is safe."

"Just do it you idiot, you wanted to be on my side so start helping." Harry inserted with annoyance.

With narrowed eyes Tam stated in no uncertain terms "Yes, I want to help but that does not make me your servant. We must get that straight right at this moment."

The room had been ignoring the redhead since she had entered the room given that other, far more important things were happening, but now she was the centre of attention. "Sorry. Ladies and Gentlemen let me introduce Tamsyn Riddle. The newest member of our ragtag band of misfits..."

"Do not introduce me using a name you have made up yourself!" She commanded.

Harry ignored her and went on "...She is a five foot five inch proto Dark Lord from the forties, sexy slim, with an evil pet snake, and the mindset of a seventeen year old heterosexual male. Oh, and her thoughts are blatantly still geared toward world domination." He then swept his hands across the incredulous stares "Tam, let me introduce everyone else. They all have their own names and so forth, I'm sure you will be able to figure them out in no time. Now undo these damn ropes!"

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Bella's large purple eyes opened slowly and when they finally registered who was standing over her she squealed "Harryee!" and a big smile overcame her features "I thought something had happened to you."

He unclipped the choker allowing her to once again move her arms and legs, then tossed the thing carelessly at the Headmaster who must have summoned it for the catch to be that perfect. Bellatrix looked terrible really; emaciated, starved, sallow skin and tiny almost childlike arms. She had looked worse in Azkaban of course, what Healing Harry had managed to smuggle in was worth less than nothing overall, yet in the months since Voldemort had broken her out had done her some good. Harry would be going to one hell of a lot of effort to get her back into shape.

It was a good thing the sheep did not know what their idiotic Dark Lord had done to Bellatrix, because it was one of the few things left in his life which Harry still actually took seriously.

"You look great Bella Black, better than I've ever seen you." He said confidently. Then nodding to the still upset redhead he went on.

"And I was fine, just went on a little stroll this morning and ran into a new friend."

She looked Tam over for a long while and eventually under her breath Bella whispered "You know she's the Dark Lord's favourite right Harry?"

"I've no doubt she was." Harry laughed before asking "Are you fit enough to go for a walk or do you want to hang around here all day?"

"Can a have a piggyback?" She asked in a childlike voice.

Wasting no time he scooped the woman up and onto his back again, and Harry then made his way toward the door. Once he reached it he looked over at the silent, concerned occupants of the room before locking onto Albus and ordering "Veritaserum, twenty minutes of deep Legilimency. I would like you to make sure dear Tamsyn is more or less on our side."

Then he was gone.

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Voluminous brown hair tied back in a practical bun and book bag in hand, Hermione Jean Granger was once more walking the halls of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. She had noticed two constants in her life which had existed virtually unceasingly since she had joined the magical world at age eleven. First, no matter the number of Lightening Charms one puts on a book bag, it will always be too heavy. And second and infinitely more overwhelming, was a pretty much constant state of worry.

At the root of which was, as always, Harry Potter.

It was as though the boy's entire purpose for existing was to give Hermione something to be concerned about. For the first two years of school this was bad enough, but overall Hermione had been quite pleased with how she had helped Harry from you know, dying horribly in some fantastical and totally unbelievable way. Then he was thrown into Azkaban Prison for absolutely no reason at all, and she had ended up spending her entire third year virtually alone. She

even completed every single class Hogwarts had to offer in order to avoid thinking about her friend and what he had to be going through.

Looking back she knew that she had not been at all happy that year. It reminded her too strongly of how alone she had been when in primary school.

Still, the year ended and Professor Snape had saved her. There was no Life Debt as far as she understood things, -this was probably due to the fact that helping students was an implied duty of being a Professor- but Hermione still felt some gratitude if not warmth toward the man for doing what he had.

Then Harry was back. And he was so... horrible to everyone. She had even heard a story about one of the younger students and what Harry had done with the boy's camera, not to mention the sheer number of times he had hexed her! Strangely, despite this behaviour it had never occurred to Hermione that she might not be his friend anymore, and instead the old feeling of worry had encompassed her once again.

Then the Goblet of Fire happened and she and Harry were friends again, sort of. That was just it, the Harry before Azkaban was virtually a completely different person than the Harry as he was once he had been released. She would admit to herself that he was still the same in some ways. Every once in a while it was like he would forget, and then start acting like he was going to grab her hand and they would go rescue a Philosopher's Stone or something.

Heading up a flight of stairs Hermione released an audible sigh.

It had been nagging at her a little, even before her father had been getting on at her to sever any ties with Harry, and her mother had been not so subtly at her to start going out with him. Hermione shuddered unconsciously at that idea, the thought of so much chaos in her life was just too much to bear.

But the thing that had been nagging at her was that maybe she shouldn't be here, or be so close to Harry. Ever since Azkaban certain phrases had been cropping up in his everyday speech, the worst of which; 'let the chips fall where they may,' was something Hermione didn't even completely understand, but totally cemented the fact the Harry really did not care about pretty much anything

anymore. He made that speech yesterday telling the wizarding world that he would simply sit back and allow them all to die, unless they paid him.

And that was NOT the Harry Potter she was friends with. Least of all was the fact that he clearly did not even need the money at all.

She opened the door across from the Tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy and walked inside; to the view of Bellatrix LeStrange and Luna Lovegood chasing Harry around the room with bats and a net.

"Hey Hermione, we're playing Mudbloods and Mugglekillers. Do you want to be on my team?"

Hermione spent most of her time in the magical world with a background sense of worry as has been said, but recently she had begun to suspect that her friend had gone evil.

Sighing she just asked "What are the rules?" in a dreary little voice.

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The four were a little sweaty and breathing heavily but they'd had quite a fun time and now were sitting on a big pile of beanbag chairs talking idly. After a while a thought occurred to Bella and she rolled to her feet and looked at Harry.

"I've got a surprise." She said with a smile. "Learned it after you left and I had no one to talk to anymore."

Tilting his head to the side Harry answered "What? Show me." The newly renamed Bellatrix Black then proceeded to morph and change, her mass and size increased, arms and legs stretched out, and as her skeletal system began to alter thick fur began growing out of her skin.

The whole process took far longer than the ease with which Harry was used to seeing from his godfather, but eventually Bella was gone and in her place was a large cat, snow white with intricate black stripes standing out starkly on her fur, and with Bellatrix' distinctive purple stare. "You're a Royal Bengal Tiger? That is the coolest thing I've ever seen in my life"

"How do you know the breed Harry?" Hermione asked him as Bellatrix turned back into a woman with a pleased look on her face.

Smiling at Bellatrix he said "You're not going to believe this 'Expecto Patronum!'" and an identical Royal Bengal Tiger burst out of his Phoenix wand and began padding around the room, glistening with silvery energy.

Swiftly shifting back into her animal form Bella began chasing the silver creature around the room and Hermione asked "I didn't know you could do a corporeal Patronus Harry." He simply winked and didn't reply.

Thirty minutes later Harry had a purring tiger's head in his lap and was scratching behind her ears absently as she slept. "Maybe I should actually learn how to transform into my Animagus form." He muttered distractedly.

After making sure the animal was in fact asleep Hermione asked the question which had been bugging her "Harry, why do you trust her? I've heard about some of the things she has done under Voldemort's orders, and she is supposed to be completely insane."

"She was in love with him." He said softly to his bushy haired friend "Did you know she never voluntarily took the Dark Mark, at least not really."

Luna was on the far side and she was listening in, as Hermione went on "She tortured innocent people, killed families. It was not propaganda either, I read the trial transcript and she admitted to doing some quite horrible things. She was proud of it."

"Bellatrix is what's called an 'Escort Guard' Hermione. What was done to her is easily Voldemort's greatest crime." He breathed quietly "What you do if you want to become a Dark Lord is get a bunch of followers and bind them to you by giving them a Dark Mark using a specific branch of Soul Magic. You then have to either kill the previous Dark Lord, or commit two acts of 'Greatest Evil' otherwise you are just another Dark Wizard. Snape for instance, has killed a bunch of people and so on but isn't anything more than a wizard with a murky past who specialises in Dark Arts.

One sure fire Act is to create an Escort Guard. You take the pretty talented daughter of a family who has slighted you, do unspeakable things to her, and eventually force her to fall in love with you. She becomes your most loyal servant, and will do quite literally whatever you tell her too. It is not a simple process, from what I can tell it is extremely expensive in potion and ritual ingredients to brainwash her in such a way, it takes an incredible amount of time and effort but is far from impossible.

It really is the worst thing I can imagine to do to someone. Bellatrix loved Voldemort to her very core, to her very Soul maybe. And yet she knew, knew the entire time by the way, that the man did not love her back. Would never love her back, and that everything she did for him, sacrificed for him, everyone she tortured and killed for him would not make Voldemort love her back. But she loved him anyway, because that was what he had made of her."

Harry continued to stroke the huge feline's coat as Hermione said "She still did all those horrible things though."

At this the green eyed man transfigured a small puppy with huge eyes and a cute look of adoration on its face. Then transfigured a claw hammer and bashed its brains in silently, so as not to wake his friend.

Hermione looked quite ill and even more disturbed at the brutal thing Harry had just done, and she quietly hissed "What the hell did you do that for?"

"I didn't do anything. It was the claw hammer that did it not me."

Her mouth dropped open, but Hermione was nothing if not sharp so she thought about it and eventually stated "So your saying that everything she did wasn't really her fault. She was more of a tool, and it was really all Voldemort's fault not hers?"

"I'm not entirely sure why she likes me so much but I have come up with a theory over the past few months. My Horcrux connection and the fact that I apparently act a lot like the Dark Lord sometimes must have been enough to fool her subconscious response. Once I'd gotten Sovereignty over her Mark she was free to choose, and if you don't mind me saying I think I'll treat her better than Voldemort would."

Since her father refused to do anything more than passively support the Dark Lord, Bellatrix had not lived a very happy life. That at least was something Harry could sympathise with.

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They made their way back to the Hospital Wing that evening and Bella was shuffling her feet and acting overly nervous "It will be fine. I'm sure she'll understand, you saved her life the other day remember."

"I've never apologised to anyone for years Harry. What if she doesn't accept it?"

"She will, I bet you anything. And even if she doesn't you still have to try don't you?"

"...Okay" She agreed bleakly, shuffling over to her niece's bed. Harry though the card was actually quite sweet, albeit in a really weird and uncomfortable way. Bella had confessed that the last time she had apologised for anything had been when she was nine years old and had broken her father's favourite vase. So the two of them had decided to do the same thing she'd done last time.

A hand drawn card with a picture of a sunflower on the front looked like a child had drawn it, although the words on the inside had been an impressive flow of calligraphy which Harry was actually quite jealous of. 'I'm sorry I exploded your eyeballs, please forgive me. Signed: Bella Black' was not the kind of card most injured people get on their bedside, but Tonks was a romantic at heart and throwing an honest sentiment in someone's face was just not her style.

Harry moved over to where Tam and Albus were chatting. For some reason they were still in the Hospital Wing which made no sense at all to Harry but he refused to comment. "Is she evil? ... No scratch that, it was a stupid question. Is she on our side?"

"Ms. Riddle is working toward Voldemort's defeat, and was telling the truth about having absorbed one of the Horcruxes." Dumbledore answered before continuing "What we are going to tell the Weasley family however, I do not know."

Tamsyn's gaze snapped to Harry, who hadn't thought of that either. "Oh gods in heaven, that is going to be one awkward conversation."

The three pondered that understatement for the longest time, and Tam eventually changed the subject "So what is our next move against the Dark Lord, while I only know of one of his active plans I can tell you quite a bit about his current organisation."

"Yeah? What's he getting up to now he has the Prophecy?" Harry asked a little interested despite his current attitude.

She flicked her mane of hair over her shoulder in a disturbingly attractive way and went on "He has begun gathering supplies and I believe he intends to seed the woods around his primary fortification for defence. Much in the way Hogwarts is protected by the Forbidden Forest. I am unsure if his plans will change now that he knows the implications of his Prophecy, however I see no reason for that one to change."

Albus asked a few more questions and Harry immediately lost interest. Eventually a shove brought him back to awareness "What?"

"I asked what plans you have for moving against the Dark Lord."

"Oh, I don't have any." He said frowning "I wasn't blowing smoke when I addressed the nation you know. I'll probably end up fighting in this war but I'm not going to do it out of the goodness of my heart. Most of the magicals in this country deserve their Dark Lord for Merlin's sake!"

"You fought and killed Voldemort not twenty four hours ago." The redhead protested.

Nodding in agreement Harry just said "Yeah, well I saw the opportunity to get Bella back. That had nothing to do with your war though did it?"

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The Lord Voldemort was not having a good day, and he was... quite angry. Yes, quite angry would sum things up rather nicely. He had decided to turtle behind the defences offered by his fortress for the duration of the time he would spend possessing the Malfloy Scion.

This was not an ideal solution for obvious reasons, his magic was limited to what the boy could channel, and unless he was willing to completely subsume the boy's Soul, Voldemort was forced to use an unfamiliar 10" Hawthorn and Unicorn wand.

And the boy, Draco, was weak. Voldemort was used to having the strength in one arm which could punch through a stone wall, or crush a transformed werewolf's skull without effort, yet here he was in his stalking around the dungeons woefully weak. He even had to sleep, which was the thing he had hated most about being in the same body as that fool Quirinus.

Lord Voldemort knew of any number of ways to craft himself a new body, and do so right at this instant should he desire. Yet he chose not to because the optimal method of rebirth required an equinox, and a most powerful foe. Meaning he had to wait seventy four sunrises until three days before the winter solstice, and he had to do so in this boy's body.

This was not what had Voldemort angry however. No, Voldemort was an Immortal, and one thing any true Immortal knows is that Time is the single resource one has at infinite disposal. Time and waiting was not a problem. Timing however was crucial, you did not get anywhere with planning unless you were willing and able to time your moves with great precision and skill.

He tilted his neck sideways with a loud click and set about going to work, allowing his mind to dwell further on his anger as his hands and wand went through the long ago memorised process necessary to create the constructs of snow and stone. Voldemort really was brilliant at magic, no mere prodigy as he had been labelled long ago at Hogwarts, but a full blown genius. It was doubtful anyone else in the world had such an understanding as to the true nature of magic, that they could construct a Simulacrum directly from memory without the aid of books or notes. And the feat was nowhere near complex or involved enough to hold his full attention.

The waif had betrayed him.

The Diary, one of his earliest and arguably greatest accomplishments, had betrayed him. And she had taken his Family Ring.

Lord Voldemort had taken to naming the waif Tam as Tamsyn was the feminine of Thomas, and as it was once the Riddle Diary it would still think of itself as his filthy muggle name. He had toyed with using Pettigrew's nickname Wormtail for similar reasons, but the man had proven himself a surprisingly capable Death Eater so he had opted to hold fast to a more forceful and noble title, knowing that for some men these things mattered much.

The waif however had been a constant irritation, least of which was when she offered good advice it was always in an unconscionably condescending tone. Hence Tam, as the name clearly irritated her no end.

The waif had betrayed him . And it was that fact which had Lord Volemort so angry.

'How could a piece of one's own Soul betray you?' had been the question which had driven him to the level of ice cold rage which he was experiencing. It was worse in that Voldemort knew the magic of the Diary was supposed to prevent any such duplicity, and therefore it had been his own failings as a student which had allowed this to happen.

She had also taken his snake, a fact which brought Voldemort as close to swearing as he had in many, many years.

When the four mannequins were finished a short while later he turned to the stoic figure in the corner, who had been standing silently and without any sign of impatience for however long it had taken for Voldemort to deign acknowledge him. Had it been time dependant news the man would have interrupted, and had he interrupted without good cause there was always the Cruciatus Curse.

"You may report." Voldemort commanded in his distinctive sibilant hiss.

Without missing a beat the man did as he was ordered, some of his Death Eaters were competent at least. "The last muggle is dead, and the town has been cleansed. As ordered the bare 'Control Wards' have been put up around the town, and they are ready for whenever you decide complete them."

"I will do so now. Have three of the uncharged Simulacrum delivered to the portkey room, but leave the last one here. Go now." The man ran off without any further words.

Once the town was secure it would be time to do some shopping, and he already had a plan. Planning was so easy for all those who were both talented and Sorted into his Ancestors House, the trick was to make it so no matter what happens, success or failure, the plan will ensure you come out on top regardless.

Harry Potter, Albus Dumbledore, or even the waif Riddle. While they may have had a few small victories so far, Lord Voldemort had not even begun to move against them. With the Prophecy in hand and a firm decision to sacrifice the proto Horcrux in his enemy, there was no more need to hold back.

With a smirk he thought one word:

'War!'

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Lens of Sanity

Hey, just because Bellatrix is one of my favourite characters doesn't mean I think the woman is sane.

'Chapter 53: Methods of Rationality' outlines Bellatrix, it's not a happy tale but it is good writing if that makes sense. If I was evil I'd create an Escort Guard, its so in character for a canonically evil person to make one as their most evil act. If you wrote a story where Harry went evil, you just know he'd take the pretty youngest daughter of an underprivileged family who had slighted him, and then turn her into his most devoted servant.

On a "completely" unrelated subject, I have put the Premise for my story 'Of Chaos and Flame' on its first page because the Summary was confusing people. Harry's not evil in it, but you might notice a similarity. Besides Kenpachi is a character I like even more than Bellatrix.

Chapter Eleven: An Owl or a Cat or a Toad

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Two days after Tam returned to Hogwarts Harry found himself alone in his private rooms late in the evening, looking out of his window at the large red ball of a slowly setting sun. He wasn't really thinking about anything much, just sitting and watching in silence while sipping slowly on a glass of firewhiskey. A dark haired young woman eventually strode in as if she owned the place and sat down across from him in what was clearly a seductive pose, lithe form stretched out emphasising the her long legs and impressive curves.

Harry looked her over, and in an offhand tone stated "That time of the month again is it Trace?"

"What?" the Slytherin girl asked in a confusion which snapped her out of her alluring little act.

Harry just gave a half smile before he went on "Do you really think it's a coincidence that every time you just happen to decide to come find me, I'm clean shaven and have just gotten out of the shower?"

Looking uncertain now the girl shifted her weight a little and Harry waved her over, brushing callused fingertips ever so lightly across her sheer gown. "Am I really so predictable?"

"Kind of. It has been over five weeks since I saw you last, so I'd say you'll be back in twenty two days." He went on biting her neck for a while before he continued "Maybe you should get yourself a real boyfriend Tracy. Daphne seems pretty happy with that Digby guy."

"Diggory..." she corrected for the hundredth time "...And who would I get Harry? The only person in this school who could compete with our illustrious Head Boy is you, and you are out for obvious reasons."

"I'd make a terrible boyfriend." Harry agreed.

Snorting Tracy corrected "No, you are still head over heels for that Fleur Delacour girl."

"I am not!" The man growled "I wish people would stop saying that."

The two went back to what they were doing for a while before the woman tentatively requested "Will you put me under the Imperius Curse again Harry?" At his look she batted her eyelashes and finished "Please?"

The man sighed a little before his kiss elicited Tracy's characteristic moan of pleasure.

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Albus was standing with them all in the Room of Requirement, and had finally decided to aid in Harry's training. "Ah my boy, I would like you to begin with some Permanent Conjugation. Attempt something simple such as a spoon to start."

Harry complied and instantly there was a big stuffed teddy bear in front of him, neatly sown and cuddly as hell. He gave it to a surprised and pleased Bella who hugged it close from her seat next to Tam and Hermione. Those two were starting to become exceptionally close.

"Excellent Harry, now I would like you to Conjure a Grandfather Clock."

Harry was confused by the request and so asked the obvious question "But I don't know how a Clock works. They are incredibly complex, how could I picture one in order to Conjure it successfully?"

Stroking his beard and looking over at Luna's rubber duck costume with twinkling eyes Albus answered "Oh, but you do not have to know how one works precisely, simply use more magic and it will spring into existence. The magic itself knows how Grandfather Clocks work."

'Of course, it's so simple.' Harry thought, as Luna agreed with a loud "Quack" and a grand gesture with her Cuban Cigar.

Harry then effortlessly Conjured a fully working Grandfather Clock, exactly like the one his Aunt Petunia had once kept in her living room. He then stated "You know, this gives me a splendid idea."

Three months later he and his friends were standing on Hogwarts Quidditch Pitch, and Harry was outlining his idea.

"If it is indeed the case that I can Conjure complex things without knowing how they work, then I have the perfect method for dispatching Voldemort. I have been working these last few months and now am ready. Observe!"

Harry then Conjured a spread of thermal fusion shock-lances, a magic tracking barrage of Nanite bombs and a Zero Point powered Mass Driver delivery system, at the same time as the gravity wave implosion field locked everyone wearing a Dark Mark in place.

He then pressed a big red button marked 'Bring the Thunder' and ten seconds later Lord Voldemort and all his minions were dead, without anyone ever having to be in danger.

"What?" Harry declared at his audiences confusion "Just because I don't know how these devices work doesn't mean they are not theoretically possible, so why not just Conjure them. Avast! Voldemort could never have seen it coming." He stated this triumphantly pulling a gorgeous French girl into a fiery embrace.

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Waking with his arms still snaked round the beautiful snake Harry almost let out an audible groan 'It would have been so nice if that would have worked.' It's a shame Permanent Conjugation like that was completely impossible, let alone all the other hundreds of things which were wrong with that dream, but Harry still felt a little cheated that his awesome idea wouldn't work.

Tracy awoke a short time later, and about ninety minutes after that when she was heading out of the door Harry asked "Twenty two days, or are you going to think about what I said?"

"I'll at least think about it Harry" was her response, offered with a slight smile as she exited the room. 'Damn, I wish I could say I hate to see her leave, but with a view like that it would be such a lie.'

As he made his way toward the Room of Requirement a while later Harry was once more thinking on his Scar. During her recent stay in the Hospital Wing they'd had a conversation, and Hermione had

noticed that his Scar was actually smaller than it had been. And on closer inspection using Pensieve memories to ensure it was not imagination, they had realised she was absolutely correct. The shape was still there, and as the stotting headaches continued the Horcrux was still obviously there. But it was thinner and definitely far less pronounced.

What this meant, if it meant anything at all, was a mystery. Although Harry liked the idea that each time Voldemort died it somehow diminished the amount of Soul he was carrying around in his head. It really was a shame that this theory was almost certainly untrue, because changeover headaches and mindlink connections would surely decrease if such a thing was happening.

Stepping into the room Harry found that he was annoyed he'd thought of it as a 'Mindlink,' when he'd grown so fond of calling the thing a Soul Bond connection much to everyone's dismay.

As his thoughts returned to the present Harry noticed with unease that Albus was standing in the room, and asked uncertainly "We're not working on Permanent Conjugation are we?"

With a strange look the old man replied "I take it you are continuing your forays into the forbidden world that is the Dark Arts, and I simply wished to observe in order to ensure you are doing so safely."

He let loose a relieved sigh from knowing he was not still dreaming, then moved over to where Luna and Bellatrix were chatting. "Think you can teach me Devil's Fire Bella? It was in the middle of one of Flighty's spell-strings but because of your warning I never attempted it."

"Why do you always call the Dark Lord 'Flighty' Harry? You've been doing it for ages and I've never been able to figure out why." This was from Luna surprisingly enough, which was strange because the girl almost always knew what Harry was going on about even when nobody else did.

He frowned in thought as Tam and the others all came into the room "It's his anagram. Voldemort is a cobbled together word in French meaning something along the lines of 'Flight from Death,' but

because I keep killing the guy and because it annoys the hell out of him I came up with Flighty."

Bella looked scandalised for a moment before breaking into giggles. Eventually she came back and answered the original question "Yes, I can teach you Devil's Fire, but you know the problems with Dark Art's don't you? They actually are dangerous. That curse is Class Seven and covered by the Interdict of Merlin mainly because if someone does it wrong the magic will explode and they would be lucky if only the caster died."

"Would you teach me Dark Magic Bellatrix? I am actually quite skilled but if I am correct in my assumptions Voldemort taught you virtually everything he knew, meaning you are almost certainly further along than I." The request came from Tam, which Harry finally decided made sense given that she was really only a teenager and that she didn't actually know any of the magic Voldemort had learned after he left Hogwarts.

Bellatrix looked at the redhead seriously for a while, her normally playful attitude noticeably absent "What may I ask is the most powerful Dark Arts spell you can control?"

"Fiendfyre." She answered immediately "That is Class Eleven Dark Magic. I convinced my seventh year Defence instructor to teach me it and can fully harness its power..." After a brief pause she went on "...Being able to command Fiendfyre without allowing it to become unrestrained should prove I am capable, do you not agree?"

Bella's purple eyes locked onto Harry and he just said "You're the expert here so it's completely up to you. I'll probably not be the best at the Dark Arts but I don't mind if you teach her, she seems to be on our side."

"Okay; Cousin Sirius could you take Yellow and the bushy haired girl, and go play somewhere else." The individuals named then protested of course, but with a glare promising pain Bellatrix stated "Devil's Fire is covered by the Interdict of Merlin. You three are not ready to learn it, please leave so I can instruct."

"Ms. Black is indeed correct Sirius..." the Headmaster injected "...This magic is treacherous, I am quite glad she is taking her tuition seriously."

Harry nodded to the old man in gratitude, eventually once they were beneath powerful Privacy Charms Bellatrix started "The wand motions are as follows..."

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"Ignis-Nocens Maleficus"

It was incanted silently of course, this was not the kind of magic a person went around bellowing at the top of one's lungs, yet Harry had been having trouble getting into the correct mental state and he didn't want to actually attempt casting it until he was confident he wouldn't kill everybody.

The pure crimson torpedo zoomed into the stationary target when he eventually cast it correctly, five hours after they had begun. Tam bloody Riddle had gotten it down in under ten minutes, yet watching the wooden figure as it was finally consumed in his cursed fire was not particularly pleasant. At eight syllables it was a very slow casting spell, but it was the effect on the caster which Harry didn't like...

Some Dark Magic made the caster feel good, powerful, able to take on the world. And it was that reason they are considered Dark, because their addictive nature was liable to make the weak willed go too far and end up hurting people who they were not intending to hurt.

This spell, Devil's Fire, did not feel good. It felt corrupting, like it was attacking his sanity, wishing for his destruction.

"You finally got it." Riddle stated unnecessarily "A good spell, from what I understand it is powerful, and the wounds it inflicts on those lucky enough to survive are virtually unhealable." When Harry didn't respond she went on "I hear you have a Pensieve memory which shows how to produce an emerald construct in the shape of a Hydra. Would you share it with me Harry?"

"You are fascinated in the Dark Arts aren't you Tam?" Harry listened for a long while as she went on about what was clearly the woman's favourite subject. After a time he got tired of listening to the virtues and brilliance of the Dark Arts, and just decided to pull out the big strand of memory and toss it into the rune inscribed dish "Maybe you

can figure out how to make one of those Hydras, but I think I've just given up on learning it."

"Bellatrix is actually quite the gifted teacher. Perhaps I will be up to dispatching my other self in no time at all, and you can truly stay out of this war altogether."

Harry just rolled his eyes "We should have a duel. I wouldn't mind a crack at someone other than Sirius who is competent... This time next week?"

"Sounds good to me." She answered with a brilliant smile, before diving into the Pensieve.

Harry went back over to Luna and Hermione, plonking down on a beanbag chair next to them. "I think I'm going to stick with mostly less horrible spells from now on, so you guys should be able to join me."

"You use the Killing and Torture Curses all the time Harry, magic doesn't get much darker than that." Hermione protested. When Harry just smiled she huffed and went on "We have come up with another idea-"

"I'm still not fighting Voldemort remember?" He cut in.

"You won't even have to leave the castle, and Professor Dumbledore said that if I could convince you to do it, it should be on November the Fifth coinciding with one of his plans. Apparently any distraction on that day will help the war effort."

Even though it was against his instincts Harry reluctantly asked anyway "Okay Hermione, what have you guys come up with?"

She had the look of having gotten a question right in transfiguration, indicating that she was very proud of her idea. "Your mindlink connection with Voldemort, you said that sometimes he can experience something powerful enough to break through your Occlumency shields correct?"

"Y-eah?" he confirmed confusedly.

"Is there any reason it can't work both ways?"

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Harry was kicking back listening with half an ear as Professor Vector outlined an absurdly simple Arithmancy concept, which Hermione was humorously having trouble grasping. He was idly scratching Bellatrix behind the ears and admiring the guttural purrs coming from her feline form.

The Professors whose classes Harry bothered to show up to were all in agreement that a Bengal Tiger was not allowed in their classrooms, and should not even be in a school full of children at all. However when Harry claimed that she was his Familiar, and that they had no choice as to whether or not she accompanied him wherever he went, they had unanimously agreed that the school rules prevented Tigers from being a student's pet.

In an uncharacteristic display of foresight Harry had taken to carrying around his first Hogwarts Letter. The one delivered to him personally by Hagrid back on his eleventh birthday. And quite clearly in the section which marked what made a suitable Familiar, were the bold and damning words written in Minerva McGonagall's own hand:

'Students may also bring an owl OR a cat OR a toad'

And given that a White Royal Bengal Tiger was in actual fact a cat the professors as a whole simply groaned, appealed to the Headmaster, and were promptly informed that Harry was to be allowed to bring his Familiar with him to all his lessons.

"I simply cannot believe Professor Dumbledore lets you get away with-, with, everything!" Hermione stated for the hundredth time.

Harry chuckled again "What can I say, it's the good old fashioned Potter charisma. How are you coming along with the easy little Maths problem Hermione, would you like some help?"

"No thank you..." She stated primly "...I am getting it fine, I do not need your assistance."

"You used to pretty much do most of my homework when we were younger. I really don't mind." Looking down at the girl's parchment

he laughed and said "Besides, you are working with a false assumption, you will never get the correct answer doing it that way."

Hermione looked over her previous work and could find no fault. After taking the time for a moan of dismay she said "I do not understand how you can find this so simple. I know this is basically above O.W.L. level, but I should be able to grasp the concept if you can."

Harry toyed with the idea of teasing her some more, but on a whim decided against it. "Do you think I should take Angelina up on her, not offer, demand maybe... on her demand that I play on her Quidditch team?" The non sequitur threw his friend for a moment, fully breaking her concentration.

"I don't know Harry, do you even want to play?" Before he could answer she broke in with "What am I doing wrong, it looks fine to me, how come I can't get the right answer?"

Harry threw out his Quidditch thoughts, took her quill and parchment, then set about explaining where she was going wrong.

At the end of the lesson Hermione shook her head and asked "How can you just understand these things so easily, and don't give me any of that 'boys are better than girls' rubbish."

"When it comes to Arithmancy we are." He stuck out his tongue and Bella growled a little "But other than that, you are falling into the same trap as the rest of the students. You keep thinking of magic and the universe as if it's in a standard three dimensional Euclidean geometry, when it's obviously more like a saddle shape that's been animated across the M-Axis."

"What does that have to do with today's problem though?"

"Well not much, that was more a meta example. Today you just had to picture the problem as an $n=7$ hypercube and the answer became obvious."

Hermione looked as though she was fighting back the beginnings of a headache, -which was totally Harry's intention- when she said "How could you possibly picture a-

"Hey Luna..." Harry interrupted, noticing his other friend "...Did you get any of that 'Blazing Inferno Hellfire Sauce' you were talking about?"

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Harry woke from his coma in the Hospital wing once again, only this time he had a long straw like tube stuffed down his throat. An extended coughing fit, and a violent tube removal later Harry asked "How's it going Poppy, how long was I out this time?"

"What in heaven's name possessed you to eat that 'Burger' or whatever the Americans call it?"

"They are called Burgers in this country too. Besides it seemed a good idea at the time, so how long was I out?"

"How am I supposed to know that, we don't eat them in the wizarding world?" Poppy asked. Then after Harry just looked at her, the Healer eventually grumbled "Fourteen days this time. From what I understand of the concoction you ingested, you should count yourself lucky."

"Can I add the condiment to my normal rotation now? My research said that if I survived, then I should be more or less immune to spicy foods." Harry asked hopefully, he really liked the taste of the burger before he blacked out.

Luna came walking in a short while later, in her hand was a spell reinforced lead container with a clear-view charm on it so it was easy to see the small bottle it contained. The thing was red, had a skull with pain filled expression on the front, and was surrounded in flames. Overall it looked quite safe, and Harry now knew the sauce tasted gorgeous.

"It worked." The blonde informed without preamble "Professor Snape was in a meeting at the time. Apparently the Dark Lord started coughing up blood and screaming around the same time you ate your lunch."

"Did he die again?"

"No, but it was just proof of concept so I don't think we need to worry too much about that." Harry got out of bed eventually and walked out with his friend, when she informed "Bellatrix has been quite worried about you, she's been moping around the castle since she found out you were going to be fine."

Harry just nodded then asked "Anything else I miss?"

"St. Mungo's was attacked while you were unconscious and I believe the Death Eaters stole virtually all the Healing Potions and medical supplies. Random attacks on muggles are going strong, and Tamsyin is still spending most of her time either in the Room of Requirement or with Headmaster Dumbledore."

'That makes sense I suppose,' Harry decided, 'those two seem to actually be interested in the war.' Since she was staying Tam had taken to wandering through the castle under powerful Illusion so as not to be recognised by any of the Weasley family, slightly altered face shape and hair colour made her unrecognisable. Neither Harry, Albus or Tam herself could bring themselves to actually tell the Weasleys what had happened, nor were they in any rush for that to change.

After a long while asked "Did anyone come up with a better method of becoming an Animagus than all that boring meditation crap, and agonisingly tedious partial transfigurations?"

Luna smiled and replied "Yes actually, Sirius finally came up with the idea to just ask Professor McGonagall and she said there was a Ritual of Release which should work."

"Okay, but if nobody has ever heard of it there must be some kind of catch." Harry pointed out.

As they turned a corner Luna said "The Potion is a Masters Brew, and the ingredients for the Ritual would apparently cost around two thousand Galleons."

The dark haired fifth year whistled at the enormous price tag and just said "What's that in muggle? Like a hundred grand or something?" He asked rhetorically "I'm still going to do it though. No way in hell am I disciplined enough to learn it the long way."

After that Harry was quiet, lost in thought on the stroll back to his room, with his new favourite condiment under his arm. "It will be the fifth in a few days right?"

"Four days Harry."

"Right, well saying as the Hellfire Sauce worked, I think I know what I'm going to do to top it." He said, parting from the blonde at his door. Harry wasn't certain, and he wasn't going to ask, but he got the distinct impression the girl was not actually Luna Lovegood.

Tonks lost such a huge bet when he eventually informed her that the disguise hadn't worked.

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It was a cold dark and stormy night in November, and Voldemort was reclining on his large obsidian throne. The town was finished for the most part, it had taken him and his two adjuncts more than three weeks of constant work to get the multiple layers of wards and ward schemes up to his exacting standards, and he had even cracked one of his old supply caches for rare and powerful rune stones.

His Death Eaters had begun calling the place 'The City of the Dead' which Voldemort found amusing, and so had allowed the name stand.

Recruiting had been a high priority and was going to remain so until he was back to full strength, but the Inner Circle who had avoided Azkaban during his time in the Albanian forest had been well prepared on the day of his first rebirth, and had already been in possession of a detailed plan to bring more numbers to their cause. For the most part the Purebloods were a pack of muggle fearing fools, but they did have influence and a misdirected longing for a return to what they believed to be the good old days.

Lord Voldemort knew that magical power, skill with a wand, and talent were far more important in reality than who ones parents happened to be. However the Pureblood movement was aligned with his goals for now, and the bodies and influence they brought to his cause made them very useful tools on his inevitable rise to power.

He had done what he could to complete the Forest around his new town also, however he had been frustrated in that the Guardian had not yet spawned. For once it did his defences would be as impenetrable as any location in the world. Not rivalling the Castle Fortress of Hogwarts of course, for that had two intersecting Lay Lines and a thousand years worth of students powering it, but a potent defence nevertheless.

Lucius strode in confidently interrupting the Dark Lord's musings, flanked as ever by his twin bodyguards. The man had been performing his duties quite admirably, since he had recovered from his session of correction under the masterful wand of his sister in law at least. Voldemort had not been pleased to learn of the use the man had put his Diary, however he would admit that allowing him to live had been a good decision.

"Yes?" Voldemort intoned to the blonde man as he knelt in front of his Lord.

Lucius rose and gestured to one of his companions "My Lord, it is well known that you are always on the lookout for any relics of the founders, and of Salazar Slytherin in particular."

"Indeed," He stated in his distinctive hiss, surprisingly interested "Go on Lucius, enlighten me as to why you are not preparing for tomorrows Wizengamot meeting."

One of the bodyguards opened a leather bound jewellery case, and Voldemort almost laughed 'Ah Regulus, you were not as successful as you once thought yourself it would seem.'

"You have done well Lucius," the Dark Lord said taking the Horcrux he had thought lost in the boy Draco's hands "Where did you come across such a treasure?"

"I have dealings with an Arranger. Even though I must consort with a filthy Goblin to do so, I ensure that there are always people on the lookout for items which may prove interesting."

'So Regulus managed to bypass the protections, and then somehow lost the item he died to steal. Then failed to have it destroyed, and eventually someone sold it for a paltry pile of Galleons.' Voldemort shook his head and said "You have done very well and you will be

rewarded Lucius. Now leave, prepare for tomorrow we cannot allow what Dumbledore plans to be successful. Send someone to bring me the fool, it appears as though he may prove useful after all."

Before the blonde man left Voldemort tore down his Occlumency barriers, then performed a very complex Memory Charm, removing the knowledge of precisely what he had offered his Lord and imbedding a command against thinking overmuch about this evening's events.

It would not do for anyone to piece together the importance of the Locket, with what he planned to do with it.

An hour later Voldemort was working on the fool, he had Cruciated the irritating smile from the man's face before he even began, and was now deeply involved in the process. On the stroke of midnight, not one second into the Fifth of November, Lord Voldemort's world exploded in agonising pain.

It did not let up for twenty hours.

He abandoned the boy's body mere seconds before it would have failed, a reward to Lucius for his admirable work in recent days.

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Chapter Twelve: Enter the Founders

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It was the fourth of November and outside the wards of Hogwarts Tamsyn Riddle and Harry Potter were squaring off against one another in a professionally constructed Duelling Platform with one Albus Dumbledore officiating. Bellatrix and Luna were wearing identically scandalous 'Harry Potter Cheerleading' uniforms and were rooting for the raven haired boy, whereas Hermione and virtually everyone else -including Sirius- were in their normal clothes rooting for the pretty redhead to beat some sense into him.

Tonks was acting as handmaiden in accordance with her lost bet, nobody was sympathetic because the young Auror was stupid enough to bet against Luna and so they all thought that acting as the blonde girl's personal slave for a fortnight was getting off lucky.

The two Duellists had been going at it for a number of minutes now, with Harry's phenomenal casting speed and seemingly superior power matching well with Tam's effortless command of magic. Not to mention that the spells she was slinging were at best considered 'borderline.' They were outside the wards because Harry wanted the opportunity to use Apparition during a fight, and that could not be done easily inside the castle.

A wandlessly transfigured Gorilla dove into the path of a crimson torpedo which Harry could now easily recognise as Devil's Fire, signifying the day's first piece of instantly lethal magic. Sirius had ultimately given up on Harry ever learning effective transhields, so they instead worked on the animal sacrifice defence. It was totally gross, but worked nonetheless.

"Crucio." Harry bellowed, green eyes narrowed in anger from the display of deadly force, his face splattered with scorched chunks of dead primate.

The Torture Curse from his Horntail wand forced his opponent to drop her mage shield and raise a solid barrier, which was instantly shattered by 'Zbax' the famous Shield Buster. Then Apparating as quietly as possible behind Tam's back Harry let loose a point blank ball of fire, which was slapped away effortlessly.

Apparition cracks of varying loudness went on for a long while as the two tried to out-position one another, with Harry eventually taking the black mist of a Pain Giver in the side. He'd managed to block most of it, but his whole left was going to be twitching and drooling for hours.

He didn't quit though, he still had one good hand and one good leg, that should be plenty good enough to finish off such a short little girl.

The two traded direct damage spells for a while, and Harry's very bones were aching from all the repeated Apparition jumps. He did manage to get a Limb Sever through her defence, but the woman seemed to think having ones legs brutally amputated in the middle of a fight was not enough of a reason to give in. Tam's casting speed went through the roof from her stationary position, and she unloaded a terrifying spell-chain from her backup wand which slaughtered the man's defences.

In desperation Harry attempted his new animagus form in hopes of a quick escape, but woke to find himself still in human form, the loser of their friendly little duel.

"Fuck!" he laconically stated from the floor.

The redhead's legs seemed to have been reattached and she commanded "Say it!"

He remained silent.

"Say it!"

'Fine'

"I Harry Potter am Tam Riddle's bitch..." he obeyed in a deadened tone "...Happy now?"

"Exceedingly."

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On the way back up to the castle Bellatrix was pouting because she lost her bout with Sirius, and Luna was commanding her handmaiden to abuse her metamorphmagus skills into looking like a

character which could only have been brought forth from the blonde's imagination. Sky blue hair in a bun and twin ponytails, heterochromatic eyes one green, one red, and the body shape of an underdeveloped fourteen year old. Luna also had an outfit ready for her; banana yellow boots, brown well darned pants, useless goggles, three belts, and a baggy orange shirt.

At the sight Harry reaffirmed the decision to never get in the way of Luna Lovegood. Poor innocent, totally outgunned Tonksy.

"This is the single most challenging Morph I have ever attempted!" The crazily appearing Auror eventually stated.

Harry looked her over and finally asked "What would you have gotten had you done a more convincing Luna impersonation?"

"It seemed like such a sucker's bet too..." The metamorphmagus sighed "...I didn't really think I was going to lose, but I'd rather not say if that's okay Harry."

"Fair enough." The green eyed teen laughed, sipping on a stabilising potion which will apparently stop the twitching, eventually. "What else does she have you doing Tonks?"

"I'm not overly sure. Mistress Luna had been sending me out for the weirdest things, obscure potions, healing salves and the like. Does it have anything to do with your Dark Lord distraction?"

'Maybe I should have asked someone else to help other than Luna now that I think on it.' Harry mused before replying allowed "That's a definite probably... You know, that crazy morph is actually quite cute once you get over the sheer loudness of the thing."

Tonksy did not look overly pleased to learn this.

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The morning of the Sixth of November found Harry and Sirius watching with concern as an insanely cheerful and focused Luna sped about between two large blackboards provided by the Room of Requirement. The girl had a piece of chalk in each hand and appeared to be completing four or five different pieces of work simultaneously.

"Yes! Yes, yes, yesyesyesyes. Gooooood, that's the ticket, Good goodgood. Vampires of course. Yes yesyes." The blond stated this precisely, albeit at a hundred miles per hour.

Luna then sprinted across the room to a third blackboard and set about writing what would turn out to be a palindromic haiku written in mandarin, while somehow humming 'the flight of the bumblebee' at break neck speed.

At the sight Sirius whispered to his godson "I think you broke Luna."

"I think you might be right." Then looking over a detailed parchment which was strewn all over the floor he commented "I think these are notes for a Runic Array. Not just a Rune Set, a full blown Array!"

The two stood watching a hyperactive Lovegood in bemused silence until Hermione came up behind them and asked "What did you do to her Harry?"

Glancing over his shoulder he defended "Well, you know how I used the Hot Sauce when I fully opened my Occlumency Barriers, and forced that sensation through my weird Horcrux connection with Voldemort?" Harry asked as a yellow rocket flew between the group to resume her plan which may or may not be about Vampires.

Tying her hair back from the wind Hermione responded "Yes, and apparently the Dark Lord has an incredibly low tolerance for spicy foods, so it almost killed him. What does that have to do with what you have done to Luna?"

"You know how I've been sleeping with Tracy on and off since last year?" Harry said "Well some of those times, the Polyjuice would wear off half way through, and she would turn out to really be Luna." His bushy haired friend didn't really know how to take this news and Harry just went on "Not that I actually mind of course, the girl is actually smoking hot..."

...Anyway, following your idea to use the Mindlink connection, we decided that because magic was based on intent, forcing the sensations of sex through the link was sure to do a number on Voldemort. The theory being that it is the opposite of pain, which seems to be all I ever feel from him."

Hermione massaged her temples, but refused to comment on how that was not in any way her suggestion. "So you used sex. Okay fine, but how does that explain all of this..." she gestured around the detritus and scribblings, not to mention the hyperactive fourth year.

Harry got a little uncomfortable and brushed his hand through his hair before answering "Well you see, every now and then she would start making this mewing keening sound, and then her eyes would roll up in her head and she would black out..."

...only, you all said that it was important that the Dark Lord be distracted all day. As a result I kind of kept casting 'Rennervate' each time she tensed up and lost consciousness. You know, so that we could keep going." He blurted that last out quickly in the hopes that no-one would hear.

Three pairs of eyes tracked the blonde girl as she dashed about the room.

"How long were the two of you..." Hermione asked, trailing off at the end.

"About twenty hours."

Padfoot sighed "Fine, I admit it. Your animagus form is cooler than mine."

The three were quite once more.

Harry finally asked "Do you think she's going to be okay?"

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Luna in fact was fine. She kept working at that pace without sleep for two days before keeling over with magical exhaustion, and when she woke in the Hospital Wing she had no memory of any of it happening. Poppy had said that all those potions and healing salves she had made Tonks fetch her helped more than they would ever know. Harry had made sure that all of her work in the Come and Go Room was collected safely, and he gave it to Luna so she could look it over at her leisure.

Tam and Albus' plan for the Wizengamot had been successful because the Death Eaters could not go to their Lord and ask for additional instructions. Most of it was boring political stuff that Harry didn't find the least bit interesting, and the only thing he got out of their explanation was that the old MLEs were being reinstated. Magical Law Enforcers who would do most of the grunt work leaving the fully qualified Aurors to fight in the war instead of having to do things like patrolling and so forth. Apparently the "emilies" had been disbanded many years ago because of budget cuts.

They had tried a few more psychic attacks on Voldemort, but the Dark Lord seemed to have developed a method of Occluding his Soul somehow that Tam actually thought was impossible.

Bellatrix continued to instruct Tam and Harry in less standard forms of magic, well mostly Tam really because Harry found himself only a marginally capable wielder of the Dark Arts. The redhead on the other hand was clearly a prodigy, and following their little Duel at the start of November the two had been pretty much in lockstep as far as all round improvement went. Sirius and Bellatrix would still win against either more often than not, but it wasn't as close as it had been.

So December had arrived, the Wizarding World had yet to give in to Harry's demands despite now knowing the Prophecy, and his friends were all training in the Room of Requirement as they had been since the whole Goblet of Fire incident.

Slowly over twenty five seconds Harry transformed out of his animagus form and back into a human as he said "I told you I could do it. All you so called experts have no idea what you're talking about!"

"Yes, yes. Well done Harry, we all bow down to your superior grasp on the limits of magic." Padfoot said mockingly "You still take an age and a half to transform though, what's up with that?"

Harry had been told by all the experts and all the books that one could not, under any circumstances, perform magic while in one's animal form. However, as soon as Harry noticed that he could hold his corporeal Patronus wandlessly once it was properly cast, he attempted to hold the thing in his animal form too. And regardless of what the experts had attested, he was successful.

"Hey, I'm getting better." The teenager defended "At least it's not taking me a full minute to transform anymore."

As soon as Harry succeeded in holding a Patronus in animal form, he had decided that it was totally possible to perform wandless magic while still an animal. Although it had taken a full month's worth of practice, Harry had finally gotten the knack and was now able to fight in his other form.

Something which nobody would be expecting as it was so widely believed to be impossible.

Gnawing on a raw carrot Harry and his godfather returned to where Hermione and Tam had ensconced themselves, "You are getting good at that bolt of lightning Albus taught you, and wandlessly now too."

"The first time I used that particular piece of elemental magic was actually against you Tam." Harry responded.

She thought about it and concluded "Yes, I remember now. It was when I was in charge of your accommodations before Voldemort's first rebirth." Her hands twitched a little and she finished "You actually hit me a number of times during your stay you may be pleased to learn."

Harry smiled at the girl and repeated her reply from last month "Exceedingly."

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It was the likely date of Voldemort's new rebirthing ritual and Harry was in the Room of Requirement with Bellatrix, surrounded by three overlapping barriers of intermixing, and incredibly lethal single use runes. Many of them the exact same ones Harrymort had used against Dumbledore, so you can guess just exactly how deadly they actually were.

As the Room of Requirement was in the castle fortress of Hogwarts, this made the place pretty much the most secure location any human being had ever been in, in the whole history of the world. Harry had warned his friends that anyone attempting to gain access

to the room would be assumed a threat and eliminated with great prejudice, regardless of what body they happened to be wearing.

Harry had done everything he could think of to prevent yet another kidnapping, and had even gone so far as to poison his own blood, wear a prosthetic arm which looked absolutely real but was filled with racoon blood rather than his own, trapped the hallway leading to the seventh floor to high heaven, and asked Bellatrix to incapacitate him if he even for one second took it into his mind to leave.

For any reason whatsoever.

At the same time as Harry was deep beneath the gibbering howling that was advanced states of paranoia, an attack was actually progressing. Only it was not on Hogwarts, and Harry was not the target.

Sirius Black dove beneath a table of his old friend Rosie's bar in Hogsmeade, barely avoiding a greenish haze which was undoubtedly some kind of dark curse. It was a standard terror attack, small groups of three or four Death Eaters causing as much chaos and confusion as they could, Unforgivables being let loose with impunity against mostly fleeing civilians.

Sirius began transfiguring bits of the debris and commanding the constructs to harass the force which was pinning him down. He'd sent out word to the Order of the Phoenix, but for now he was on his own.

At the same time as the battlefield transfiguration attacked he jumped up and snapped off a number of direct damage spells taking down both attackers. Sirius moved cautiously over to the barmaid and found the still attractive woman alive, if unconscious and sporting a likely concussion. The dog animagus eventually made it to the street at the same time as the Auror force arrived, the dark witches and wizards in Death Eater garb turned from their mindless destruction and focused on the new threat.

Unforgivables, and skilfully cast dark spells kept the Aurors off balance, but this was what they were trained for so they would normally have been able to deal with the attack. Had it not been for a tall, well built figure sporting an old English broadsword. The

colossal number of hexes, jinxes, and curses being let loose by the man was astounding, matched only by the unrivalled power which was clearly fuelling them. The sight reminded Sirius of the single time he had seen Voldemort up close back in the late seventies.

He had the element of surprise as his ally, as the Aurors were mainly attacking from the east side of the village and he was coming in from the south. Sirius managed to get close enough for a high likelihood shot which he whispered and unleashed before any of the Death Eaters had noticed his arrival. The man simply turned, batted the military grade curse aside with ease, and vanished in a silent crack of Apparition.

Sirius didn't really feel any pain, which was singularly strange given that he'd clearly just been sliced in half across the navel, but he was aware enough to note two things before his vision darkened. First; his ass looked better when still attached to the rest of his body. Second; Frank Longbottom had just killed him.

'I thought Frank was dead?'

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Lord Voldemort stepped out of the large Cauldron and inspected his new body with a now well practiced ease. He was quite pleased and set about constructing Yaxley's new hand with as much cheerfulness as his damaged psyche was capable of producing. Task completed he moved over to the still body of his former host, noting sunken eyes which would undoubtedly be bloodshot, twitching limbs, sallow skin, and a smattering of gray in the boy's otherwise blonde hair.

'Hmm, the younger Malfoy truly had survived. Impressive.'

The Dark Lord then started modifying the boy's memory, removing a number of things he would have knowledge of from the time spent acting as his Lord's vessel, most notably Voldemort's true views on the Malfoy's foolish obsession with blood and inbreeding. He did however make sure to leave his newest Inner Circle member all the memories of warding and the advanced magics Voldemort had utilised while sharing his form. The intention being that the boy may learn something useful from the experience. It made sense given that skilful Death Eaters were more useful than unskilled ones.

Leaving the skeleton crew necessary for the Rebirth Ritual Voldemort moved over to his "guest," he launch into creating his fourth and final adjunct. Keeping the woman alive while under prolonged Cruciatus Curses was devilishly tricky, Bellatrix had been a master of this and not for the first time Voldemort regretted the loss of his old favourite, still it would probably take hours and there was nobody else in his organisation with the finesse necessary to drive a person insane using this method. Simply holding the curse too long would kill in mere minutes and a dead body was of virtually no use to him, so he was forced to do it himself knowing the right points at which he needed to pause for healing.

Long hours later Voldemort was pleased with the results, and taking the object Enchanted by Helga Hufflepuff, the Dark Lord finished the process of creating his last adjunct. Ensuring their loyalty had been relatively straightforward; it had been devising a method by which the fragments could escape to their objects in the event of the host body's demise which had proven the most challenging. This way the primary purpose of his Horcruxes was intact, at the same time as they could be utilised in this most unusual way.

Returning to his Throne Room the Dark Lord introduced Helga to the other three Founders and ordered Godric to report on the day's activities.

"The attack on Hogsmeade was an astounding success my Lord. Easily a dozen fallen Aurors, and I dispatched Sirius Black myself." The tall man said, ruby encrusted Greatsword strapped to his back. He looked the picture of health and strength thanks to the efforts they had gone too in order to repair the damage, most of it done to the body from simply spending a decade in the same room day and night. "At the arrival of Dumbledore himself I ordered the withdrawal. As you commanded not a single Death Eater was lost and the ones who were out of the fight were recovered. The Ministry will have a hard time reporting this as anything but a victory for our cause."

Today had been a good day, his plans were running smoothly, his body was more powerful than ever, and the path to total domination was becoming ever clearer.

The waif may have betrayed him, however the girl was the weakest of them all. Dear Tamsyn would not be able to stand in the way of one of him let alone five.

From his place on the obsidian throne the Dark Lord Voldemort laughed.

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Harry strode into the Hospital wing a day later and cornered the pretty Healer "What's up Doc?" he asked with a cheeky smile.

"You are here to see Sirius Black I assume?" the woman replied shaking her head at her frequent visitor's antics. When he waved for her to go on she said "He is still asleep I am afraid. How a man can survive being cut completely in half with a weapon imbued with Basilisk Venom of all things I will never know. Bearing in mind timely assistance and a Phoenix it still should have been a fatal wound."

Harry nodded at this and just repeated the old Healer's maxim "'If you are alive when we get to you, you will be out of here by morning'..." the teenager grinned "...Is that not what your profession uses as its unofficial motto?"

"He will be fully recovered once he wakes on his own, although he will have quite a nasty scar circling his abdomen." Poppy confirmed, basically proving just how effective magical medicine actually was once and for all.

When Padfoot eventually regained consciousness most of the crew was in the Hospital Wing waiting for the traditional post-injury briefing.

"How long was I out this time?" the dog animagus asked, totally stealing Harry's favourite opening question.

Poppy rolled her eyes and replied in the same tone as always "About twenty hours. Although I do not believe I have treated you since you were a student here."

The story they had cobbled together from eyewitness sources, Snape, and various other accounts were more or less in agreement. Voldemort seemed to have four new lieutenants, each in possession

of a founders object and going by the names Godric, Helga, Salazar, and Rowena. And the two whose former identity their side could determine were that of Frank and Alice Longbottom; who were going by Godric and Rowena respectively.

This was agreed to be 'not be a good sign' especially given that Frank Longbottom had a magical core matched by few and all but second to none.

"Do we have any idea what the last two look like?" Sirius asked after spending a long time spouting foul language over what happened to his old friend.

Albus shook his head in the negative before adding "One thing may leave us a little optimistic. I believe that following this attack we may convince the Ministry to listen to young Harry's demands."

Harry starts at this pronouncement "You think they'll cave?"

"Perhaps."

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Harry Potter strode into the Ministry of Magic Atrium in early January escorted by his diverse entourage. On one side, a cherubic blond Ravenclaw who appeared to have walked in by accident while shopping in London, a white tiger with intricate black stripes weaving about the human's legs playfully, an incredibly stressed looking Hogwarts student who appeared to be going over class notes in her head fearful of making a mistake on an exam.

On the other side, the Head of an Ancient and Noble House robed in formal attire, a woman of indistinguishable age or description distinctive in that she had a wild mane of red hair, and the idiosyncratic beard and eye twinkling of the Chief Warlock himself.

Travelling by expanded elevator and moving across various floors the group eventually found themselves outside the Hall set aside for Wizengamot meetings, waiting to be let in.

Sipping the drink he had been offered Harry exploded "Gah, I haven't tasted coffee this bad since I was in Russia during World

War Two!" He noted that two of the people within listening distance took note of this statement.

Harry found this quite amusing.

Given the sheer amount of information that had been circulated about him, and given that pretty much all of it was contradictory, Harry was reasonable sure that there would be a task force set up at some point in the near future, a task force which would undoubtedly be attempting to discover whether or not Harry had been in Russia during the Second World War.

After a time Albus and Sirius split from the group and took their places in the chamber, one as Lord Black and the other as Head of the organisation itself. Harry was eventually asked to proceed, and from his station in the centre of the room was made to answer a bunch of tedious and inane questions.

Lucius Malfoy had been attempting to lead his voting bloc into simply tabling this discussion entirely, but eventually one member got tired and just bellowed "Okay boy, what are these ridiculous demands of yours. The Prophecy has been determined to be valid, so I at least want to know what outrageous concessions you have in mind."

At the command Harry gave his best winning smile. He was going all out once more this morning; his legendary boots, full formal robes, Hack sunglasses, and the famous Aging Potion he had been using to great effect during the Tournament. "Nothing to onerous I assure you ladies and gentlemen. A few small favours and you will be assured the help of Harry Potter in the tackling of this little Voldemort problem of yours."

That famed mass shuddering greeted Harry's casual use of the Dark Lord's anagram. 'Really now, even Trace has gotten over that foolishness by this point.'

"Do not say the Dark Lord's name Potter!" Lucius snarled.

Harry just raised an eyebrow "You are an Inner Circle Death Eater yourself, surely you're not afraid of the man's silly nickname. Out of interest would you like to remove that glove you're wearing on your left hand? I think it might prove interesting." The two got into a bit of

a pissing contest and eventually Harry just shouted "Okay, shut the hell up everyone. Do you want to hear my price for helping you guys fight Voldemort or not?"

"Just get on with it." The same man from before ordered impatiently.

"Well I don't want much really; I need a full pardon for my friend Bellatrix Black for all crimes committed before she joined my side." There is a little shocked muttering which Harry ignored "My other friend will be claiming the old Gaunt Seat on the Wizengamot under the name Riddle during the summer and I need you all to figure out who is currently using that vote."

"Why wait until the summer Harry?" Padfoot asked from his raised platform. 'Oh yeah, I neglected to tell any of my friends what I was going to be asking for. Silly me.'

Harry went for a dignified air when he said "She can do it alongside me this summer once I have completed my O.W.L.s, when I can be considered an adult and able to claim my Family Seat. Trying to get emancipated early would be a bitch if I haven't passed a single exam for magical competence." A few of the members nodded along a little with this, they were all quite well versed in law given their positions.

Harry continued "I need a bunch of licences, Apparition, Portkey creation, Animagus registration, Unforgivable use, and so on. And don't complain, killing the Dark Lord is far from easy, -take it from someone who has done it multiple times at this point- so offering me a 'Double Oh' status is totally reasonable!"

The fifty one members of the Wizengamot argue for over an hour about the logistical things Harry had requested, no firm decision had been made but from the look on the Headmaster's face Harry got the impression they would agree.

Sighing the same random Wizengamot member asked "Is that all, I was under the impression you would demand a huge pile of gold or something?"

"Well..." Harry got a bit of a mischievous smile "...I have a few other personal requests, -that other stuff was really to make fighting

easier- but mostly I won't do anything at all unless you guys build me a Zeppelin!"

'What can I say?' The teenage animagus thought to himself 'Predictability is weakness.'

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At the same time as the Wizengamot was giving Harry everything he wanted, Salazar paced impatiently in the large sterile waiting room. He had destroyed the Simulacrum wearing his image and Vanished its remains long ago. And was now impatiently waiting to be interrupted. After an unfortunate length of time an attractive older woman entered the room and spoke. "What have I told you about-

"My dear I feel you have me at a disadvantage." The handsome man cut in, using a voice which most women would describe as mesmerising. "I awoke several hours ago with no knowledge as to how I arrived here, perhaps a beautiful woman such as yourself could enlighten me as to my current circumstance."

The Healer blushed at being addressed in such a way, before haltingly squeezing out "Of course Mr. Lockheart, it would be an honour."

Salazar smiled engagingly.

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Lens of Sanity

The Intent-based Mindlink Luna scene was requested by a reviewer back in ChapThree, I lost your name so e-mail me and I'll credit you. Harry's Animagus form was actually quite an elegant solution, I had three bits of information to fold together; it was crappy at first glance, it worked in line with the Intent!Mindlink suggestion, and it might help defeat Voldemort.

Chapter Thirteen: The Caravel of Caerbannog

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Building a magically enhanced replica of the Hindenburg was not something which could be easily completed overnight unfortunately, so Harry was told that he'd have to wait at least until late February for delivery of his ridiculous demand. The others had gotten the stuff he'd asked for relatively quickly however; the Naked Granger Library of Sex Magic (named not for its content but for how much the title would annoy his friend) was complete but would be housed in the Zeppelin, Tonks triple increase of pay grade despite only being out of the Auror Academy for eight months, Padfoot's all expenses paid trip to the Veela colony in Tuscany, and Dumbledore's one metric ton of Lemon Drops had all been accounted for within the first two weeks much to Harry's admiration.

As soon as the preliminaries had been sent to them by the Wizengamot Harry decided, as a show of good faith, to send Hedwig with parchment reading; 'Rufus Scrimgeour's hand is located between the Centaur's legs under the Fountain of Magical Brethren.' Thereby keeping his promise to the irritating politician, and freeing the severed limb from Harry's Fidelius Charm.

So now he was strolling onto the Great Hall of Hogwarts in lockstep with his friend Luna, who was riding on the back of some form of half ostrich, half racehorse creature which seemed particularly partial to attacking random Hufflepuff students for some reason. You had to admire Luna for coming up with what was arguably an even more outrageous demand than Harry.

The basic idea being that; in the same way as an ancient Greek wizard bred huge guard dogs to defend his fortress and then came up with the notion of combining them into a single multi-headed version of the sentry, which came to be known across the world as the magical breed 'Cerberus,' or Hagrid's fourth year combination of Manticore and Fire Crab which he'd named Blast Ended Skrewts, ... Luna had taken it upon herself to ask the Departments of Mysteries and Magical Creatures to work together creating a magical animal she said really should exist.

And now poor Justin Finch-Fletchley was staring across the Hall in fear of once more being accosted by the dreamy eyed fourth year and her terrifying abomination.

Taking over a large section of the Slytherin table this morning for a change Harry and his friends set about claiming their breakfast and eventually the green eyed man exploded with "How about 'The Pillar of Autumn'?"

"No!" Hermione vetoed instantly "You are terrible at naming things, what the hell kind of name is that for an airship."

Sirius suggested "The Millennium Falcon?" at the same time as Harry went with "HMS Enterprise?"

"That is the fourth time you two have tried to steal a name from a movie, come up with something original!"

"The Highwind?" stated Luna, "The Black Pearl?" inserted Harry. Seeing as Hermione was getting frustrated Bellatrix tried for "The Nautilus? That's a good name for a ship I think."

The other students still hadn't really gotten used to the fact that terrifying mass murderer Sirius Black, and psychotic lunatic Bellatrix LeStrange seemed to hang around Harry and his other school friends in a school full of children as if it was the most normal thing in the world, taking part in stupid arguments and eating at the breakfast table just like they were normal students themselves.

"Think of it this way Hermione," the strange redhead none of the Slytherins had ever seen before the winter holidays injected "at least they have stopped trying to name the thing after the Titanic or the Hindenburg itself. I for one do not particularly wish to board a vessel which is doomed."

Finishing up his meal Harry turned to the nay saying bookworm "You coming to Arithmancy Hermione? I'm sure we'll be able to come up with a good name by next month so stop stressing, you'll be able to explore your Library in no time."

Following along the bushy haired girl challenged "Yeah, like you're not looking forward to trying out your Diplomatic Immunity in France."

"Well, that too." Harry grinned "I'll be like the bad guy from Lethal Weapon 2."

'Let's see how you like international incidents Gerard Delacour you Bounty Hunter hiring asshole!"

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Frustrated because of his ninth straight defeat at the hands of the red headed Not-Dark Lady, Harry went over by Luna to see if she needed any help pouring over her notes from last year's incident in the Room of Requirement. They had already decided on their first course of action once payment had been delivered, and that had been taken straight from the annotations she had left. But the rest of the stuff Luna had come up with seemingly needed to be translated into making any kind of sense at all.

"I am certain this is important, but for the life of me I cannot figure out what it is supposed to do." The blonde said frowning at her calculations.

Harry took a look at the original parchment and said "I still agree with you Luna, but I'm not particularly gifted at Ancient Runes, so I'm not going to be any help figuring out what your Array is supposed to accomplish either."

The two talked for a little while, most of it basically just Harry acting as a sounding board while Luna attempted to unravel the mysteries of her own mind until Bellatrix eventually sauntered into the Come and Go Room. "Harry, Yellow, you asked me to come remind you when it was time for the meeting."

Scratching the back of his head Harry got too his feet and asked "Yeah, thanks. Do you two want to come with me?"

They nodded and half an hour later the Harry and Luna were sitting across the table from none other than Rita Skeeter in a private room in the Hogs Head. Bellatrix began skilfully massaging the journalist's shoulders as she greeted her old dorm mate "Heya Franny, how've you been? We haven't seen each other in years."

Ill concealed terror flashed across her face as the woman replied "Er-, F-fine Bella, never better." For some reason Harry's friendship with Bellatrix Black made more than just the students a little nervous and he could never figure out exactly why.

Without commenting Harry just went on "Well, how about we get down to business. You two can chat to your heart's content later. Do you agree to my proposition?"

"You wish me to write the first fully endorsed Biography of Harry Potter?" Rita asked, hardly daring to believe such a prospect would simply drop into her lap.

"Battling the Basilisk; co-authored by Harry Potter, Order of Merlin, Second Class, Full member of the Dark Force Defence League, and two time winner of Witch Weekly's Most Charming Smile Award." He then flashed the woman his well practiced dazzling smile, which Rita had the grace to roll her eyes at.

"You are serious?" Rita asked.

"Of course. Now that I am being commissioned to fight in this war it is high time the public get to know the true tale of the Boy-Who-Lived's life."

They spent the remainder of the day outlining all of Harry's adventures and misadventures over the years. It was an epic tale of romance and adventure, filled with drama, excitement, time-travel, unrequited love, and heroic self sacrifice. With the kinds of magic and swashbuckling unrivalled by even the most fanciful of fictional works.

Harry told of the time he had rescued the Veela Princess from an evil count, the adventure where the primary love interest (Hermione) had been captured in Amsterdam by those lesbian werewolves and he'd been forced to perform a classic Castle Infiltration. The duel at age nine with the man who had six fingers on his left hand, and had murdered his brother at an even younger age, and the occasion when the Dark Wizard 'Gingerbeard' was finally shown to have been controlling the young hero with poisoned 'Elven Candy' and the fiendish Malfae family.

Overall it promised to be the trashiest mound of pap ever forced through a printing press.

Harry's favourite part was the picture for the cover; Harry was shirtless and using pretty extensive glamours to appear with comically bulging muscles, and Luna Polyjuiced to look like an airbrushed Hermione Granger was pushed right up to him, head tilted back begging for a kiss.

This thing was going to make them millionaires!

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Standing on what Harry had been erroneously naming 'the flight deck' of his newly christened Zeppelin the teen took yet another experimental spin of its classical wooden ships wheel, which had been installed as a means of steering by request of Harry himself. The airship lurched dangerously as it had each time the boy had done this and his tricorne hat once more fell from his head.

"Harry, I swear to god if you do that one more time I'm going to hex you!" The brunette promised hotly, still not having gotten over being made into a mostly fictional character without her consent.

Travelling above the English Channel Harry was over the moon to be in possession of such a majestic means of transportation. It was far from completed of course. Yes the thing flew, was fuelled and reinforced magically in an attempt to prevent history from repeating itself, but Harry's discussions with Tamsyn stuck in his mind and now the boy was hell bent on procuring the biggest, baddest ward stones money could buy. All with the aim in mind to have a cavernous labyrinth and overall sky fortress which he could call his home, magically expanded spaces not least of the modifications they had in mind.

"Come on Hermione, I've never had a home that was really mine, can't you let me play with it a little?" Harry responded to his friend with big wide eyes, and open orphan-y face.

The girl capitulated instantly with a look of empathy and understanding. 'Sucker!' he thought as he picked up his pirate hat, and went back to piloting his cool new toy. "Are you sure I shouldn't go with my idea for the meeting room Hermione?"

"The one where your throne-like chair would have a trapdoor in front of it, so that whenever you use the phrase 'you have outlived your usefulness' it would open, and the person would be forced to fight some kind of terrifying monster in the pit below for your amusement?" The girl asked making sure the two were on the same page.

Nodding along with Tam, the redhead answered "Yes, I believe that is what Harry was referring to."

"Then Yes. I am in fact sure that doing such a thing is a bad idea."

"Come on Hermione, just think of it. Dolores Umbridge comes with a proposal from the Ministry, and I say 'There will be no agreement, let us see how you fare against the Rancor' and then the trapdoor opens and we get to watch her being eaten. It would be awesome!"

His oldest friend sighed and flopped down onto her seat. Eventually she got up the courage and asked the question she had been dreading "Harry..." she drifted off before tentatively finishing "...Y-you would tell me if you were evil wouldn't you?"

The worst thing from Hermione's point of view was the fact that her friend did not actually answer her question.

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It was an early spring evening and Fleur Delacour was engaged in frivolous small talk at one of her father's never ending Embassy functions. The platinum beauty would not admit it out loud but she was so bored, and had been to varying degrees for so long now. Once upon a time she loved doing things like this, meeting with influential and sophisticated people. The kinds of people who were educated, who knew the difference between Champaign and sparkling white wine, and could discuss art and politics in intelligent ways.

"My, it seems to have gotten dark out awfully swiftly." Robért commented in French with a slight Parisian accent.

Looking over her shoulder at the unnaturally darkened sky Fleur became curious and slowly moved closer to the large window

overlooking the Châteaux's grounds. The monstrosity which was blocking out the sun dominated the western horizon, and the French woman knew without a shadow of doubt that Harry Potter was going to be somehow involved in whatever insanity was about to befall her life. No-one else could conceivably have thought it a good idea to stencil what might only be described as a squirrel dressed in a green spandex ninja costume all over the side of such a gigantic... thing.

Claiming three glasses of fine white wine Fleur summarily downed them as fast as possible, and about twenty seconds after she had done so the doors slammed open and a notoriously familiar man strode into the room as though he owned the place.

"Bon-Jow-ah! Gets a me sums Vino, Silver Plate!" Harry commanded in mangled French, with an accent which caused most of the room to shudder violently.

In his defence Harry did not immediately sashay over to his obvious target. Instead he made his way through the dignitaries, insulted a number of distinguished guests, hit on a number of their female companions, threatened her father, drank more than his fair share of wine, and caused so much horrified wincing at his failed attempts at conversing in her native tongue.

"I believe you came close to starting a war between our two nations this evening." Fleur commented dispassionately once the irritating Englishman made his way over to her.

Taking the news in stride Harry said "Well fancy meeting you here, I for one am greatly surprised. This being my first diplomatic engagement and all."

"As if you came here for any reason other than to find me 'Arry."

"My, my. Full of yourself this evening Mademoiselle." Seeing her glare directed at the former Hogwarts Champion poor Robért attempted to rescue her.

Fleur knew she should have been unhappy with what Harry did to him, but it was all she could do to hold in her giggles. It would not do to appear as frivolous as her younger sister Gabrielle. "Why are you 'ere 'Arry, stop with 'ze shenanigans and just tell me?"

The man pinned her with that infuriating jade eyed gaze of his, and she fought hard not to react in any way. After a painfully long moment Harry let loose a charming boyish smile and said "I've business in the United States, a cultured diplomat such as yourself would be a wealth of expertise and more than pleasant company."

Fleur was aware that she should fight this on principle, Harry was involved after all, but looking into those big green eyes she just knew she was going to help.

'I really hate you Harry Potter.'

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"Welcome of the Caravel of Caerbannog, my home away from hom-, well... home away from Hogwarts at least." Harry directed the statement to Fleur as he waved his hands vaguely around the airship.

"Caerbannog?" Fleur asked.

"It's Welsh and means 'Turreted Castle.' It turns out I wasn't allowed to name my Zeppelin the Flying Fortress for some reason." He responded instantly.

"That name was taken Harry," the bushy haired girl added her opinion "...and we named it Caerbannog in honour of your Animagus form."

"Oh yeah." Harry confirmed. Turning to their French companion he informed "It ties in with an old Arthurian legend which the muggles made into an award winning documentary."

"That movie wasn't a docu-" Hermione protested

...and was ignored by Harry as he moved over to Luna "Mistress Lovegood, set a course for the New World. Full fast ahead!"

"Aye, aye, Cap'n" The blonde answered fiddling with her eye-patch and stuffed parrot.

'Really, nobody but Luna was getting into the whole sky-pirate theme.' Harry thought. It was like a joke to them, they'd even vetoed his renaming Galleons 'Sky Doubloons'

Shaking their various heads the crew remained quiet and set about taking it easy for the flight across the North Atlantic.

Only one room had been completed to everyone's satisfaction, and that was because it was critical the running of the ship; the Duelling Pit. Given Caerbannog's planned outline the airship was going to require a tremendous amount of magic intake to keep functioning at optimal capacity, and the obvious solution was arrived at by both Albus and Tamsyn. In the same way as Hogwarts Castle had wards which were in a large part maintained by the students, the airship would have a Duelling Pit whose walls would efficiently absorb all magic which was cast onto them.

That way they could practice as much as they liked, and so long as they avoided using the unabsorbable Killing Curse, the magic they were using would be taken in and used to keep everything working. Massive redundancy on charging runes was a given, but for the most part Caerbannog would not need to be parked on a Lay Line for ridiculous lengths of time to keep all the magic on it functioning.

Still, it was working fine for now so next stop; the U.S. of Aye.

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"Look at this place." Harry said floating high above the city.

"What?"

"Well for one; the air is green." He pointed out.

"It does look quite 'ze dump I agree." Fleur confirmed.

"What did you call this town again Luna?" Harry asked.

"The Holly Wood, situated in the North American district of California." Luna answered, looking down at their destination with distaste showing clearly on her face.

Harry sighed before summing up his thoughts "I have never seen such a wretched hive of scum and villainy."

"No." "Non." "My either." "I quite agree." They room added their opinions, for once coming to a rare consensus.

Regardless of first impressions Harry actually had quite the enjoyable and productive afternoon. After completing the day's first little task with the help of Bellatrix, Fleur and Harry had split off in search of Alicia Silverstone who ended up throwing a drink over the English boy's head following a rather clumpy attempt at... well whatever, he had to at least try saying as he was in the country.

Now it was late evening the two were traversing a cold warehouse filled with hanging meat, on their way to complete Luna's mission. Fleur was sceptical at the surroundings, but at her companion's confident self assurance and repeated admonishments that she should trust him, she was holding back the majority of her hesitation. Taking the French girl's hand Harry moved passed a man who was clearly acting as a bouncer, and the two found themselves in a packed club with deafening trance music being played at ear splitting volume.

Wasting no time Harry set about dancing with three stunning young women who looked to have stepped straight out of an Eastern European fashion magazine, leaving the platinum blonde to fend for herself. Things were going well for the first half hour or so, that was when the sprinkler system began drenching the dance floor with anti-coagulated blood.

Harry managed to spot a guy who must have been at least two meters tall sinking his fangs into Fleur Delacour's pretty lithe neck, before his Vampire companion began gnawing on his own carotid artery.

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Tossing himself into one of the chairs across from the stylish metallic office table Harry set about applying Essence of Dittany to his injured neck. He handed the displeased French girl a shooter of Holy Water and Silver Nitrate which she downed with a wince and went back to healing her own neck wounds with medical charms which were far out of Harry's league.

"A Vampire Rave 'Arry? I simply cannot believe even you would do these things sometimes."

He chuckled at her attitude and handed her a bottle of swill the Yanks laughably called lager. Pulling another 'Budweiser' from his expanded pocket and cracking it open finally he made eye contact with the man he had come all the way to the States to meet.

"You killed five of my clan." He stated evenly.

Looking the person over Harry decided that this Vampire basically had the same hair as he did. "We did not ask them to bite us. It is hardly our fault that our blood 'dusted' them now is it?"

The man was an influential Vampire by the name of Deacon Frost, and was not a clan Elder despite his attitude. From what Harry and his friends had been able to discover, Frost was in the process of setting up a bit of a coup d'état with regards to the Vampire nation, resurrecting one of their blood deities and putting himself top of the pile so to speak.

Not that they cared overmuch, it was an internal matter which the Wizarding World had very little right or inclination to become involved with.

After the silence dragged on Frost flicked his feet onto his desk and sat back in a comfortable slouch. "You ... are the infamous Harry Potter."

"So it would seem."

"And you have trespassed on my property with your Veela concubine." Fleur's eyes narrowed at this designation but she wisely contained any outburst.

Smiling over at his friend's composure briefly, Harry returned to the matter at hand. "I have brought you a present."

Flicking a box dragged from another magically expanded pocket onto the desk, Harry just stared at the man as he pulled out the severed head which it held. And watched as the Vampire's eyes widened in recognition.

"Is this who I think it is?" Frost asked.

"If you think it is Wesley Snipes, then yes."

"But how? We've been trying to kill this fucker for twenty years." He asked in disbelief.

Harry just laughed "The racist Vampire hating prick has been cutting his way through the clans for years, but he was arrogant enough to make his living as a muggle actor not fifty miles away from where we sit." He shook his head "Bellatrix and I met with his bodyguards and that crippled what's-his-name earlier today. It wasn't even that difficult because we got to him during the day."

Anyone claiming they had then stolen Snipes' 1968 Dodge Charger and crashed it into a cop car would be talking out their arse and risking an international incident.

"Well then. I must confess that such a gift makes me far more amenable." Frost admitted.

Nodding Harry got on with the purpose of the meeting "I'm sure you are aware of the situation we are facing in the United Kingdom."

"I am not even a Clan Elder, why come to me begging for aid?"

Doing nothing but cock an eyebrow at the man's understating his importance Harry went on "I do not come looking for Vampire fighters Deacon. Voldemort has the service of a Werewolf named Greyback, and he promises to be a pain in my arse." Frost made an agreeing gesture to this statement, Fenrir really had made a name for himself over the years "We're not here for help, more like we want Vampire ...neutrality

Although I have been told that 'carrot' gift is one thing, but you will be more likely to agree with our position if I offer a 'stick' too. So to that end I would like to inform you, and the Vampire nation at large, that if any of you side with Voldemort I will decimate your numbers. Personally removing one tenth of the Vampire population."

Fleur watched as Deacon Frost and Harry Potter looked one another over without flinching. A meeting of equals as etiquette demanded, but with a certainty on all sides that the talks could only go one way.

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Hermione and Tam were lounging in the main room of Caerbannog, chatting idly following quite an enjoyable day of sun and sand in the States. Bellatrix and Luna were playing some hand game with a tied length of string, and the room was quite relaxed, listening to tunes from the local radio station which Tam had managed to finagle the Wireless into picking up.

The coalescing shape of a silvery Bengal Tiger broke this relaxed scene, and the Message-Patronus in Harry's strained voice snapped the four too attention.

'Death Eater ambush. Help now!' it then reeled off just enough detail for them to create a hasty Portkey.

A distinctive tugging sensation later all four found themselves in an out-of-the-way alley, which would later turn out to be the closest entrance to the Vampire Club. Harry and Fleur were back to back trading shots on either side with masked and unmasked figures, who had somehow tracked their target to this location.

Tam wasted no time unloading her vicious magic of the Darkest varieties pairing up surprisingly well with the bookish teenager, while at the same time Bella and Luna made a beeline straight for Harry. Those fighting on the North side of the battle went down in an unexpectedly short amount of time given that all bar Harry himself were focused on those combatants, but when they finally linked up retreat proved impossible.

"The Portkey and Apparition wards let in reinforcements but don't let us out." Tam screeched when the initial escape failed "We're going to have to hoof it some distance from here."

They attempted to do just that but a powerful figure with a ruby hilted broadsword grasped in his offhand Apparated into the newly cleared North side of the alleyway, escorted by three masked Death Eaters and one unmasked showing the easily recognised image of Draco Malfoy.

'Honestly things just keep getting better' the redhead thought 'now we have to try and dispatch the strongest Founder!'

At least Harry was in high spirits, he was laughing and exchanging shots freely now that he'd managed to bring down one of the adjacent buildings, cutting off southerly escape as well as any assault from that direction. Maybe some of the enemy had been crushed too, it was a nice thought. Tam watched as Harry tossed a handful of roasted peanuts carelessly in the air and wandlessly transfigure them into living shielding; six neon blue Cornish Pixies which hovered around the teen waiting to accept one of the casually thrown Killing Curses.

Tam briefly wondered when Harry had taken to using peanuts in battle, the protein in them really made it a stroke of energy efficient genius, but the thought was interrupted when the living Horcrux going by the name Godric entered the battle against them personally.

The man fought in a similar style to Tam which made sense, only the spell selection demonstrated left the redhead a little envious. Hermione, Luna, Fleur, Bellatrix, and Tam herself went five to one against the primary enemy, leaving Harry to face the chaff alone.

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Battling these idiots was a breeze, Harry had been joking around, taunting them and so on as he effortlessly took down his lesser opponents. Now he was down to his final challenger and his last Pixie defender dove into an AK saving him.

Seeing the other five had the main problem in hand, Harry grinned "Well hello there Draky, nice to see you so far from the good old halls of Hogwarts" as he ducked another jet of green 'Man, he's pretty quick with those Unforgivables I'll give him that.'

The two traded a few spells and a few insults, bringing into question the others parentage and so on, but Harry wasn't expecting to take a Trefoil Butchering Curse in the neck and across the torso.

'Oh my gods, I got killed by Draco fucking Malfoy.'

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Draco knew he was on the wrong side of a mismatch, but he was the last Death Eater standing and he really had nothing to do but suck it up and keep going, hope that someone would come to his aid. What was worse was that Potter didn't even appear to be trying, which was infuriating in the extreme!

The time spent playing host to the Dark Lord had been an intensely painful experience, although unrivalled in its usefulness. Not only was he catapulted into the ranks of the Inner Circle, but by practicing the magic his Lord had utilised Draco was now one of the more competent duellists. His Killing and Torture Curses could be snapped off with nary a thought, and his personal favourite would win the day for him in an unanticipated victory for their cause.

Seeing Potter duck his Cruciatus, and mouthing off once more, Draco sent three bands of serrated magic at his foe. And watched in surprise as the boy he'd hated since the first year Hogwarts Express fell dead to the ground in three separate chunks.

'Never fuck with a Malfoy, Potter.' The silvery blonde triumphantly commented in his own mind.

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Seeing her Harry fall, Bella went mad, and Godric wisely chose to drop the escape wards and activate his group Portkey, barely managing to save his men's lives in the face of such a terrible threat.

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At the same instant that Harry Potter lost his life an Oracle by the name of Sybill Trewlawney uttered a long lost rhyme, last heard on forgotten island of Avalon by a young woman named Morgan LeFay:

The lions sing and the hills take flight
The moon by day, and the sun by night
Blind woman, deaf man, jackdaw fool
Let the Lord of Chaos rule

...and was unfortunately overheard by none save a disbelieving class of fourth years during their morning Divination class.

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Lens of Sanity

I originally intended to end this chapter after Harry's funeral but ran long on the word count unfortunately. Sybill's prophecy was a "Chant from a children's game heard in Great Arvalon, the Fourth Age," so I obviously didn't write it myself.

Lastly; Blade-One came out in 1998, so the events the movie chronicled probably happened around '96ish, Harry in this story prevented those events happening by showing up at the Blood Rave one week early.

Perpendicular Universe remember?

Chapter Fourteen: Funeral for a Friend

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Having friends die sucked.

Having a funeral for a friend dying sucked more. Funerals sucked in a different way, but they did suck far more. It must have had something to do with gathering a group of people together for the expressed purpose of acknowledging that someone had died. Her mother Selene Lovegood had died when she was nine, and she had reluctantly attended to that funeral too. Suffice it to say that event had sucked.

Luna did not like funerals.

They had been gathered around the Cemetery not far from the War Memorial and Harry was to be buried right next to his parents, whose graves her friend had admitted to never having visited. There had been a long procession of inane comments from a number of people who, let's face it, probably hadn't ever even met Harry. And yet the politics surrounding the situation gave a number of people the opportunity to hear themselves talk, at great length, while in front of a "captive" audience.

Riddle had taken charge after it had happened. The group had been back aboard the airship and spiriting across North America, and later the North Atlantic, before the body had even gotten cold. Poor Bellatrix had been quite brutally Stunned during most of the trip, not only for their safety, but her own.

That was a fortnight ago, now Luna was sitting in Godric's Hollow wearing her bright yellow sundress, and watching the crowd dispassionately. Seated alone, and without the support of her family, Fleur Delacour was crying. Which really shouldn't have been all that surprising to the blonde. Luna had gotten her first opportunity to interact with the French woman on the four day crossing over to the States, and had come to a conclusion regarding the woman's character that would infuriate her should it ever be voiced:

Fleur and Harry were essentially the same person.

Tell the Veela girl that to her face and she would be liable to start tossing curses at you, but in Luna's opinion it was quite an accurate description. For different reasons and in different ways the two were totally off their heads, both spew tremendous quantities of manticores' shit at anybody and everybody they interact with, and experience a lifestyle so disconnected from the rest of the world as to be entirely abstracted from the lives lived by those who would otherwise be peers.

So to see the woman openly grieving at Harry's memorial service shouldn't be all that surprising.

The others were all behaving as expected; Hermione, Riddle, Sirius Black, and Headmaster Dumbledore, all acting pretty much as you'd expect them too. Bellatrix had been in terrible shape at the loss of her friend but had ended up cresting that into a lasting state of numb shock, only really coming out of it when the redhead "Tamsyn" occasionally attempted to look after her.

Luna stalked out and let loose a loud crack of Apparition at the first opportunity to get away.

Funerals sucked. Luna friggin' well hated funerals.

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Arriving by Knight Bus to the part wizarding village of Ottery St. Catchpole in Devon, Hermione thanked the conductor absently and took off in search of the missing blonde girl. She would have preferred to utilise her recently acquired license and Apparate to the location. Unfortunately she had never visited before, and she didn't trust her understanding of the whereabouts well enough to risk a jump.

It briefly occurred to Hermione that one of her friends from first year lived in the same town, but as she'd never been invited over she didn't know the co-ordinates for that location either.

The brunette knew she was not acting in the most intelligent way coming here on her own, but since The Event had happened all the adults in her life had gone back to treating her like a child. A situation Hermione found maddening in the extreme, due to the implication that her thoughts and ideas were listened to, not based

on merit, but because she was one of Harry's friends. With him now dead it was like she had been stuffed back in with the other students, and labelled 'just another clever little child.'

So out of spite she had ignored everyone's advice and gone in search of Luna by herself, despite the standing danger posed by travelling alone while the British magical community was in a state of Civil War.

As she closed on a large pond or small lake, Hermione heard the indistinct noises of her target, well before she got close enough to lay eyes on the odd girl herself. Luna having been missing for two days, ever since the end of her first friend's funeral. Eventually Hermione realised she was listening to a strange song:

"Oh a plimpy one or two or three,
A plimpy I would like to see.
A plimpy small and lightning quick,
I'll catch a plimpy with my stick!"

Long blonde hair falling to her lower back, the girl was singing the jaunty tune and waving a long tree branch back and forward as she looked across the water. "There you are Luna. You have been missed, we were all starting to get worried about you." Hermione said in a gentle but carrying voice, which the blonde blatantly ignored.

"Ohhhh a plimpy is slippery and often wet;
You'll never catch one with that net!
A plimpy stew is mild and sweet;
A plimpy stew just can't be beat!"

Cautiously approaching the younger girl Hermione spoke softly "Luna please look at me, there are no such things as Plimpies. Aren't you ready to come back to the Castle?"

"Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh a plimpy one or two or three,
Plimpies come and play with me.
So raise your stick and sing along
to my spiffy plimpy caaaatchiiiiing soooooooooooooonng!"

SMACK! Hermione had attempted to interrupt her song near the end. She really shouldn't have grabbed the girl's arm because Luna span round and cracked the older girl across the face with all of her might, breaking the stick and knocking Hermione to the ground.

With such a look of anger and hatred on her usually placid face, Luna looked down at her. Nobody had ever looked at her with such unrestrained malice before, and Hermione knew for the first time what it was like to have another person hate her personally.

"Why are you here you stupid little girl?" was the question directed at her from behind focused eyes holding no regret.

Suddenly Hermione didn't even know.

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A week before they were scheduled to take a maiden voyage on the, as yet unnamed Zeppelin, Luna was exiting the Headmaster's Office, leaving the wise old man with a feeling of having missed something important during his discussion with the quirky young woman.

As Dumbledore went in search of a pain relieving potion to treat his unanticipated headache, Luna was skipping toward the Room of Requirement in high spirits. Her life had been on a definite upswing over the last year and a half, ever since she had recognised Harry following his incarceration in Azkaban, as being someone else who saw the world as it really was.

When a person suddenly started seeing the world's insanity for what it really was, they did begin to act a little strange, but it was fun to be able to do so with a friend; which was exactly what Harry had turned out to be, and the reason her life was currently so much fun.

The room was appearing as if it were a cavernous expanse of jagged rocks and precious stones for some reason, implying that Harry had gotten bored with using the same rooms over and over, so had opted for someplace different and unusual. He was lounging around with Bella and appeared to be tossing chunks of his lunch across the room and attempting to wandlessly transfigure them various animals.

"Do you have any control over which animal they transform into?" Luna asked.

Harry just shook his head "It seems to be mostly subconscious, but the size tends to be determined by power and whether I'm trying an organic to organic transfiguration or not." He mused before looking over at the blonde "Any luck on your Runic Array?"

"None at all," she informed cheerfully "although I am getting the impression that the haiku has something to do with the Lost City of Atlantis for some reason."

Bellatrix wandered off as the two got into a discussion about magical theory, after a time Hermione strolled in "...and you pair that with the Lyapunov–Malkin stability theorem-" spotting the fifth year walking beside the redhead, Luna switched topics without missing a beat "-of Flumpawump Evacuation. An important part of any person's daily ablutions as you well know."

Hermione frowned and asked "What are you two talking about?"

"Flumpawumps." Harry replied. "Dealing with the damn things can be pretty distracting but Luna's right, leaving them where they are is just unhealthy."

Tam shook her head and left the room in search of Bellatrix, while Hermione went on a long rant about none existent creatures. Eventually the blonde voiced a total non sequitur throwing her through a loop. "You seem tense, when was the last time you had sex with Harry?"

Hermione's eyes bulged and after a little spluttering said "What? I've never. We're just friends Luna."

"What does that have to with anything? Harry and I are friends, yet we have sex all the time." The older girl couldn't respond to this in any kind of intelligent way, and Luna's jaw dropped open in feigned realisation "You mean to tell me that you have joined Harry's Dark Harem, but you haven't taken advantage of all the free sex?"

"I HAVE NOT JOINED A DARK HAREM!" Hermione screamed in outrage.

"Of course you have. Do you really think it's a coincidence that, Sirius aside, all the members of our Dark Army are hot girls?"

With a final screech the bushy haired girl span and legged it from the Room of Requirement, having completely forgotten what she had been meaning to do that evening.

As soon as the door swung shut Harry let out a full belly laugh. "Do you think she's ever going to figure out you're just messing with her?" He asked

Wrinkling her nose Luna said "This from the guy who held a loud conversation where he could be overheard, talking about how his airship was going run on Orphan Blood Biodiesel."

"Come on, its cheep and renewable. How could Hermione come to the conclusion that I'm going evil if I'm so concerned about the environment?" Luna stuck out her tongue "You know, maybe one day I'll just tell her that a Crumple-Horned Snorkack is a silly sounding name for a cousin species of Unicorn which is thought to be extinct."

"Snorkacks do occasionally kill and eat the people they find, but do you honestly believe that telling her would be enough of a hint though?" she asked "I mean, we go to a school of magic, Britain's national sport is played flying around on line segments, and the poor girl still thinks these things are anything but crazy."

"I still like her though" Harry stated.

"Yeah, me too." Luna admitted "Even if she can be a bit patronising sometimes and I have to fight the urge to strangle her."

Luna Lovegood's life was pretty sweet as had been said, she had even managed to scam the Headmaster into allowing her to re-print 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Pirates' as a present for Harry and his upcoming expedition to the New World.

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Looking down at the sixteen year old muggleborn, Luna had to brutally suppress a wave of remorse as she noted the darkening bruise right across the girl's cheek. She carelessly tossed the

shattered branch over her shoulder "Why are you here you stupid little girl?" The jaw of the girl in question dropped open but she didn't make a sound "Just leave me alone Hermione. I have neither the time nor inclination to put up with your idiocy today."

She stalked off in search of another plimpy stick, leaving the other girl on the deck. To her credit Hermione did not immediately leave, and after a time caught up with the other girl. "What happened to you Luna?" She didn't answer. "What have I done to deserve being attacked, I was just worried about you after you went missing."

"You haven't done anything new Hermione, you are just a narrow minded fool like everyone else." Luna took a deep breath "I'm sorry, I should not be taking this out on you ... It's going to be strange not having anyone sane to talk to anymore."

Feeling quite insulted and more than a little confused Hermione asked "I don't understand?"

"Yes. I can well believe that." Luna chuckled a little "You do not even see the perverse nature of having a man who murdered one of my closest friends walking around Hogwarts as if he owns the place."

"W-what? Who?"

"The redhead you have been so smitten with, Tom Riddle." Blue eyes gazed over the water in the direction of her lost friend's old ramshackle home. "Ginny Weasley was great you know, I am aware that you never really knew her, but she was funny and intelligent. We used to play such silly little games when we were younger, and yet she was murdered and the man responsible suffered no punishment at all."

"Tam isn't that bad, you heard the circumstances yourself, and Headmaster Dumbledore trusts her." Hermione protested.

"Yes Dumbledore, such a bright shining beacon of goodness that man is, but we were talking about 'Tamsyn' who, by the way, was named the feminine by Harry to annoy him." Spying a small round fish with two legs ending in webbed feet, Luna brought down her stick with a sharp crack, catching the 'none existent' creature unawares "You know that Illusion our mighty Heir of Slytherin is so proud of?"

Hermione was about to speak but instead simply nodded "I did some research and the thing is kind of ominous in its implications. It is called a Shadow's Masquerade. One part visual glamour, one part confusion ward, and a wide area application of a Legilimency branch titled 'Suggestion,' which kind of makes all the unsuspecting people hit by it less inclined to pay close attention to her appearance."

"That sounds quite effective, you said it was ominous?"

"Having someone who has only studied for seven years at Hogwarts capable of commanding such magic is not a good sign. I hope I am wrong, but without Harry there is a real chance that we have yet another Dark Lord to deal with."

Hermione moved over to the younger girl and set about inspecting the strange, and apparently very real, plimply she had caught. "Harry wasn't your only friend at Hogwarts you know."

Resting her head on the other girls shoulder Luna did not reply.

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The following two months passed in tedious monotony. Sirius was drinking far more than could be considered healthy, but it was chalked up to him having pretty much no real friends left; Peter had betrayed him, James had been killed by Voldemort, Remus by Snape, and now Harry by his own bloody stupidity and overconfidence.

He got out of bed with a throbbing migraine, and excused himself from the well put together apartment presumably owned by Sarah? Sally? whatever the hell her name was, making his way back to Grimmauld Place.

It was an incredibly good building in which to mope.

Hermione had been spending more time with Luna, studying for her O.W.L.s mostly, but with the two of them keeping an ear open regarding news of the war. The surprising recovery of Gilderoy Lockheart and his subsequent activities toward the new 'emilies' was suspicious enough, and hearing of how the Head of Magical Law

Enforcement Amelia Bones had signed off on him leading the forces just hammered nails into his coffin.

Yet when the two got permission to meet with the Headmaster they were informed that; Yes Professor Snape had reported that the man was spending his free time in what was now being called 'the City of the Dead,' and was being addressed by senior Death Eaters as Salazar. So their insight was basically of no help at all, and a sudden burst of competence from the fraud of a man had not gone unnoticed by their side of the conflict.

Tamsyn and Bellatrix had nigh on vanished off the face of the earth, but as they did occasionally show up at mealtimes, Luna's fears seemed to be mostly unfounded. In all probability the two were focusing on their efforts improving Tam's increasing familiarity with the Dark Arts, as well as making improvements to Caerbannog which the redhead had mostly taken possession of in Harry's absence. At least spending most of her time with Tam gave Bella something to occupy her mind, and thereby not go on a one woman rampage in an attempt to track down her nephew, and cut him into tiny little pieces.

As she had repeatedly promised to do.

Many, many times.

Strangely enough the book 'Battling the Basilisk' had been first on the top ten list ever since Rita Skeeter had released the thing, and appeared as though it might have actually made Harry a millionaire after all. Hermione didn't remember ever being kidnapped by lesbian werewolves, but if the experience was anywhere near as enjoyable as her fictional counterpart seemed to find it... anyway, that was unimportant.

They had seen Tonks a few times over the last eight weeks and she informed the teens that the Order had joined battle with several groups of Death Eaters, but the Dark Lord seemed to be laying low for the moment and had not been spotted taking part in any fighting at all. Although the Godric Founder had been chased off by Headmaster Dumbledore personally during an attempted assault on the Potter's graveyard.

"Why does it feel like it's already over?" Hermione asked the younger girl.

Luna shook her head "I don't know. But I understand precisely what you mean." Shrugging off the bad feeling she cheerfully asked "So you are writing an article about how to get around Gamp's first law of elemental transfiguration?"

Eyes lighting up Hermione started talking about one of her favourite subjects "Yes, it is fascinating. I got the idea when I realised how strictly the law defines 'Food,' you see all you need to do is..."

Bleak thoughts firmly behind them the two continued on their walk to the library.

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Getting aboard what Harry had decided to give the ludicrous name of Caravel Caerbannog had always been a challenge. One could not realistically Apparate to it, as the transient nature of its location made knowing the correct coordinates of one's destination a matter of great frustration. Using a broom as a method of entry was quite acceptable for the most part, only Tamsyn hated brooms, always had and always would. So it was down to her to finagle a method of ingress which was both efficient and dignified.

And being the genius that she was, Tam had come through with flying colours. A dedicated fifty mile Portkey, whose destination was mounted not to a location fixed to the earth, as all other portkey's in history had been, but a destination quantified by a similarly dedicated Rune Stone. Tam was quite proud of her solution given that nobody else had ever accomplished such a feat, and now would be able to come aboard what she was traitorously beginning to think of as her Airship, regardless of where the thing happened to actually be parked.

"I am going to have to trap the living daylights out of the atrium at some point." She idly mused, easily lifting the forty kilogram Rune Stone into position one handed.

Tam had recently conducted the same strengthening ritual she remembered doing in sixth year, while only a little shaky on the

ethics front, the thing did require a strong stomach, but was not really evil. Amusingly enough the most difficult part in setting it up had been the same for Tam as it had been for Voldemort; acquiring enough gold to purchase the raw materials. She remembered the effort she had gone too originally in order to have LeStrange float her the cash, and had been forced to do something similar with Sirius Black.

Nevertheless it had been successful and her body, while surprisingly strong despite the slight of build, was now back to a more manageable vigour. It was highly unusual but thinking back to her past life, Tam now remembered the events as if she were wearing the body of a pretty redheaded young woman, which of course made some of the memories quite bizarre indeed; Cynthia Hamilton and Augusta Sinclair for instance, Tam reflected in amusement.

She made her way back to her room and set about dressing in a hodgepodge set of Battle Robes for this afternoon's expedition with the Order of the Phoenix. Sheathing her Unicorn hilt dagger, -she hadn't been the one who killed it and the creature was already dead, so best not let it go to waste- Tam felt her choices over the past few months to be quite freeing.

Among a number of changes she had made was the firm decision that she would not become like Voldemort, regardless of the cost. And too that end Tam had concluded that the date of her birth was to be May 29th 1993, a mostly symbolic act which dissidentified her from her other self, whose birthday landed on New Year's Eve.

So here she was three years old, in the body of an almost fifteen year old, and with memories totalling roughly twenty two years; when taking into account past, present, future, and time spent conversing with a prepubescent child whilst trapped in an enchanted Diary. And for the first time, in all of that time, she had chosen a side. Tam would likely never be one of those 'die for the cause' types, but she was here, and she was fighting.

Tamsyn Riddle was the real Heir of Slytherin.

She would win this war and the world would know it to be true.

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Luna was walking side by side with Hermione as the pair went to pick up a late dinner from the kitchens. This was something the older girl liked to do on occasion, as it gave her the opportunity to meet the Elves face to face, and let them know how much she appreciated all the work they did around the castle. There was a reason Mistress Grangy was their favourite student after all.

Snacking lightly the two made their way across corridors and up flights of stairs. They were once again discussing the ridiculous biography Harry had commissioned not long before he died, with Hermione still not quite understanding how the Evil History Professor, Septimus Snake had such a devoted following amongst a certain section of the fan base, despite being a parody and having a glaring lack of any positive characteristics at all.

After a time the two overheard a gaggle of fourth year girls singing a little chant they had presumably picked up some place or other, and as the last line was uttered a horrible, ear splitting wail of agony was released from the shorter blond girl. The howling went on and on, and blood began pouring from her mouth, ears, and tear ducts. Not a moment later her eyes popped and chunks of flesh splattered across the walls of the hallway, then there was left nothing. Nothing at all but silence.

Standing naked as the day she was born was a tall attractive woman, seemingly unconcerned about her state of undress or the fact she was scanning the area with face, back and full perky chest all smeared in the blood and guts of a teenager she had just murdered. The strange figure ran her fingers through her hair steadily a few times, removing gobbets of grey flesh and splattering them to the floor with distain.

Taking in the terrified fourth years, the woman began to move both her hands in a complex pattern of gestures, shooting out a wraith of grey-black energy which crawled through the girls' eyeballs, and caused the group to drop to the floor unconscious.

An attack on her fellow students snapped Hermione to full awareness and she pointed her Vine wood wand at the enemy. Who raised her eyebrow and spoke in a soft, confident tone "Stand down Hermione. That was nothing more than a memory modifier, please relax."

"W-what? Who are you?" Hermione demanded.

"Why I am Luna Lovegood of course." The woman replied with a slightly sardonic smile on her face "Now, would I be correct in assuming it to be the evening of June the Eighteenth 1996?"

Hermione managed a small nod.

"Excellent, would you be so kind as to assist my acquisition of a Time-Turner? Today is the day of the Holy Forest Massacre, and I would greatly appreciate any help in preventing such an event from happening again."

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Lens of Sanity

Plimpy Song and upcoming hatred of coat-rails were swiped word-for-word from SlyGoddess, who wrote the only legitimately sexy Girl-Who-Lived I've ever read.

For the most part fanfics tend to play Luna as scenery, never really having thoughts or feelings of her own. Hopefully this was a bit different, playing her as being exactly as sane as Harry. Also, Googleing "Flumpawump" actually makes that scene funnier

This and previous chapter managed to work in a bunch of reviewer requests; told ya I'd work everythin' in! Hope y'all like

Chapter Fifteen: Let The Chips Fall Where They May

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"Should you not be trying to find some clothes?" Hermione asked as the two strode toward the seventh floor and Dumbledore's Office.

Wiping her hand absently across her bare chest and looking curiously at the still damp bloodstains, Luna turned to her friend "Probably." When it appeared she had done talking the blonde continued "I would dearly love to take a shower also, but time is of the essence. The attack will begin in a little over five hours ago, so we don't have much opportunity to dawdle."

The tenses of Time-Turning were not new to Hermione so she just took them in stride, but it was something else which was bugging her, and although the teen had a pretty detailed suspicion she still had to ask "How do you know this, and why do you look so much different? And why does it look as though you've got chunks of your own dead body in your hair?"

"Well, that's because I kind of do have chunks of my own dead body in my hair..." she stated absently. Coming on the stone gargoyle that acts as the guardian to the Headmasters Office, Luna began another series of hand gestures. When a bright ball of pale blue light sprang up in front of her palms she commanded "Move out of my way guardian or I shall blast you into rubble, I do not have time to argue!"

The gargoyle just sneered before it was brutally smashed into ten thousand pieces of cold inert stone.

"You did that without a wand." The brunette commented as the two made their way up an animated spiral staircase.

"So I did."

"I've never seen even Harry command wandless magic like that."

"True, but it wasn't wandless magic. I've been living in China for the past four years and I stopped using a wand altogether about a year after I arrived..." Luna said rooting around in the Headmaster's oak desk, and after almost vanishing in one of the massively expanded

draws, came across a familiar hourglass necklace "...I've been using Wu Jen exclusively since then."

Suspicious confirmed Hermione briefly wondered if most of the populace would come to the same conclusion, or if it was just because she was friends with people who did not appear to believe there were things which were impossible.

"So you are a time traveller then?" Hermione asked, quietly hoping that she was just experiencing a psychotic episode, and that none of this was real. Unfortunately for her the blonde woman just nodded. "May I ask how old you are?"

Pressing her nakedness against the teenager, Luna wrapped the Time-Turner around their necks, just before they vanished across time she looked deep into her big brown eyes and answered the query "Twenty five. And do not worry, this time we are going to win the war."

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"So, what? Everyone died in the fighting or something?" Hermione asked looking out the Office window, seeing the school grounds bathed in early afternoon sunlight.

"Meh. They're not dead anymore so who cares." Luna waved it off negligently "Would you mind calling Fawkes?"

Hermione just looked at her in confusion "Fawkes?"

"Yes Fawkes, he is a Phoenix." Seeing as she was about to protest, Luna went on commanding "Humour me."

"What? Just call his name or something?" The blonde nodded and Hermione uncertainly said "Erm, Fawkes can you come here please?"

There was a bright flash of flame as the immortal creature appeared between them, then it glared at the naked blond woman as if to say 'Should you not be trying to find some clothes?'

"Would you mind fyreflashing us to the outskirts of the Dark Lord's main base?" Luna asked and the Phoenix looked over to Hermione

who kind of nodded, her weirdness meter was beginning to max out already.

"Are you implying that I have a Phoenix at some point in the future?" Hermione manically whispered the question.

The two were consumed to the very core in cleansing fire, reappearing on the outskirts of what was once the town of Greater Hangleton and Luna said "Not at all. You have one right now!" The bird tilted its head then took to the air, winging off at an incredible speed in the hopes that it may yet support its current bond mate.

"I-I, Bu-, I, What?"

'Hmm,' Luna mused 'I think I may have broken her.' Aloud she said "Come on, there is an attack underway and we need to try and call a retreat before they all get eaten by the monster."

Hermione chased after her barefooted companion as she vanished into the dark, ominous looking forest. Despite the current circumstances the use of the word 'monster' was not lost on her.

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Moving the Pain Giver onto her offhand, Tam set about conjuring a flight of infectious arrows and sending them toward the incoming threats. Things were not going well, it was almost a fortnight until the full moon so the werewolves gathered in this forest were far from at their strongest, and it had seemed a better day than most to attempt a small force infiltration.

Yet wouldn't you know it, but they had been expected.

Diving into a clumsy roll beneath the pouncing man, Tam sprang back to her feet and viciously brought her left arm up, slamming her ridge-hand into the side of its neck. Ritual enhanced strength messily taking the creatures head from its shoulders in a vicious explosion of gore.

As soon as she had noticed the ambush, Tam had shot off a Message-Patronus to Albus, who was acting as backup on this mission. It was funny but her other self had never been capable of the necessary emotion to power even the Mist, and here she was

new name and body, capable of constructing a powerful silvery Nagini. A small perk maybe when you're frantically sending your fastest Spell-String at far too many opponents, but a perk it was nonetheless.

Organ Liquefying Hex, Shadow's Glaive, a 'Lacero,' an 'Impactus,' then back to the Organ Liquefying Hex.

Time and again.

And again.

Again!

'Just one more time damn it Tam!'

'Just one more.'

Again!

Tam took a Banisher like a slap to the side and flew careening into a huge tree, but retaliation died on her tongue the instant she saw why Auror Tonks had attacked her; decimated forest floor and small fires taking up the area she had been crouching mere seconds before.

It was a ten minute running battle later before Albus and the reserve force of Order members arrived on the scene riding on the back of Thestrals. Stupid fucking wards even stopped Phoenix travel apparently! Her team of eight were down to five but they had dealt with the initial werewolf pack long before the reserves had gotten to them.

"Push on or retreat?" The purple haired Auror requested orders, from her position tending to her aunt Bellatrix.

Tam and Albus looked to one another. "They probably do not know we are here and have survived, or there would have been more opponents." The old man said.

"And we are already more than half way through this accursed forest." The youthful girl finished.

"I will escort your team through," Dumbledore informed them "we cannot permit Amelia's other assault go to waste."

The two teams vanished from sight using various methods of Invisibility, Cloaks, and Disillusionment Charms.

They then made their way deeper into the Forest.

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Cresting a small rise Hermione and Luna were side by side, each overlooking a scene of absolute bedlam, and attempting to come to terms with what was happening. There was a good reason this event came to be known as a Massacre, and it was quite apparent looking over at the sheer number of humans who were down, some sporting burns and others lying in blood splattered chunks. The majority would still be alive if the information Luna had acquired was as accurate as she believed it to be, but focus was inexorably drawn to the main problem. The sight was of a Phoenix intercepting repeated balls of superheated fire, which were being unleashed from the eyes of a creature which utterly defied description.

"What in Merlin's name is THAT?" Hermione asked, staring in disbelief at the reptilian monstrosity which was attempting to incinerate the Headmaster, as the old man directed his forces.

Taking a deep bracing breath Luna distractedly answered "That, Chibi Granger, is a Jabberwock..." She closed her eyes and, setting herself for what she was about to do, finished "...and now I need to go down there and fight it."

"You can't!" She gasped, looking at the horrifying scale of the monster "You'll be killed for sure fighting that thing on your own."

"Probably." Luna agreed "You are to sound the retreat as swiftly as you can. As I am sans Vorpal weaponry, I am unsure as to how long I can keep it distracted."

Hermione's mouth got as far as opening in protest before the lithe and still bare twenty-something charged off toward the creature's back, chanting unusual syllables under her breath. Hoping her own silencing charms held fast the brunette ran off to do as asked, she was frustrated but at least she was following orders.

First enchantment in place Luna closed on her opponent, but must have been sensed because the gigantic form twisted its neck at an impossible angle, and regarded her with unforgiving eyes of flame. Not slowing in the slightest the woman closed the distance and part trusted, part hoped, Fawkes would save her from frying.

Parrying a claw moving with viscous speed and intent, her second spell lost a measure of its built up energy and she was forced to begin again as she padded up the back of the abomination's rough, scaly hide. Feet shredding to ribbons on the insecure footing, Luna began what could be described as an intricate dance, had anyone been paying close enough attention to watch her, or if one could be said to dance whilst attempting to run full tilt up a Jabberwock's back. She breathily sang out the chant needed for her spell:

"xīng xīng zhī huǒ kě yǐ liáo yuán"

Intent building in menacing gold light around her shaking fist, the blonde barely avoided the gnashing of teeth, connecting sadistically with the creature's skull. Sick with fatigue Luna tumbled thirty feet to the earth, barely able to make out the vines and trees of the forest rising to her aid. Her first spell had activated on command, wrapping time and again around the Jabberwock, and pinning the colossal reptile to the ground.

As Luna met with the mossy earth, the small hope that it would buy enough time for her friends to retreat shot through her mind, this enemy was simply too powerful to be stopped so easily, and they may even take it into their hearts to bring her unconscious form with them when they go.

Oblivion claimed Luna Lovegood, with a smile on both of their faces.

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Hermione felt a sad smile break across her face as it did every time she looked at that plaque; 'The Harry Potter Wing.' It had been so typical of him to actually pull off something crazy like having the hospital officially renamed, and seeing the words on polished bronze always made her smile in that way.

She was visiting the Hospital because she had been told Luna would be woken soon, and for the first time in months she was allowed to be present during one of these briefings. Something about the fact that Hermione had taken part in the battle seemed to entitle her to actually learn what in the hell was going on first hand.

Sitting in the surprisingly comfortable chair Hermione got out the N.E.W.T. textbook she had been reading now that her final O.W.L. exam had been sat yesterday afternoon. History, which she just knew she had done terribly on, confusing the leaders of the 1659 Goblin Rebellion with those of the Goblin Revolt of 1695.

By ones and twos the room began to fill; Sirius, Tonks, Tamsyn and Bellatrix. The Headmaster swept in with his characteristic robes, side by side with Professor Snape. After a little idle chat, Madam Pomfrey was asked to wake the older version of her Ravenclaw friend. There were many questions which needed to be answered, and ever so many more which Hermione had to restrain herself from asking in front of the whole group.

"Hey guys, how long was I out this time?" the blonde woman asked as soon as she regained consciousness. Honestly it was like a bloody tradition or something!

Well it counted as a first Polyjuice imposter question at least, and a very long time was then invested attempting to further ensure that the woman was actually who she claimed to be. Somehow Hermione had never really doubted that it was the case, fantastical events like these became surprisingly common when people like Luna Lovegood were involved.

"I am satisfied that the young woman is who she attests to be," Dumbledore eventually stated, he had probably been doing his Legilimency thing "...as unlikely an explanation as time travel appears on the surface. Do you wish to adjourn to my office to discuss your reasons for resorting to this course of action Ms. Lovegood?"

"Nope, I'm good." Luna said cheerfully "Besides, a bedside briefing is traditional at Hogwarts."

"Would you tell us what happened?" Hermione broke in "You admitted to me that we all died fighting."

"Yeah you did." She confirmed looking distractedly about the room.

"Well...?" Tonks prompted when it appeared she had done talking.

Surprised by the prompt, Luna asked "Well what?"

"Do you not intend to share some details, or maybe outline your plan to see that it does not happen again?" Hermione questioned.

"Oh, no not really." Luna said to the surprise of everyone in the room
"And it's not like I actually have a plan."

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU DON'T HAVE A PLAN!" Sirius bellowed, his temper having been a little shorter in recent history
"What kind of person travels back in time without a plan!"

"There is no need to act so boorish Siri. I prevented lots of people from being eaten by the Jabberwock, and after we do a little ritual at the end of next month, I will have achieved both of my goals." Luna informed "In fact, I am rather surprised the time travel thing actually worked."

The room collectively began rubbing their temples. It seemed that her ability to cause headaches without appearing to even trying was still running strong, despite an additional ten years of life.

"Ritual?" Tam asked, being the one with the most perseverance.

"Oh my yes." Luna confirmed getting out of bed. While she had been cleaned up since the battle she still wasn't wearing any clothes!
"Without Harry we cannot win this war at all."

Clearly distracted by the sight Sirius absently stated "Harry's dead Luna. I don't think you travelled far enough back in time."

Arching her back and stretching her arms over her head, the -y'know, stunning- blonde woman let out a long yawn "He'll get over it. And when he does the chips will fall as they may."

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The majority of the people at Hogwarts were quite put out and frustrated with Luna's turning down of their generous offer to talk about what had happened. Their desire to plot a timeline, figure out how it had all gone wrong, and attempt to prevent the future she had implied from happening had similarly been rebuked, albeit gently.

Greatly perturbed by this stance they had eventually asked for any useful information regarding Voldemort's organisation, and Luna had told them the former identity of what she claimed was the most dangerous Founder; Amelia Bones was apparently kidnapped and used in the Dark Lord's most recent rebirth ritual, then later turned into Helga unfortunately.

This news went a long way to explain how the MLE Director could work so closely with 'Gilderoy Lockheart.'

"I don't understand why you won't tell us anything about the future, something might be important. We can come up with a plan!" Hermione asked her later that day. "At least put some memories in a Pensieve for us like the Headmaster asked you."

"You know that wouldn't actually work don't you?" Luna said, looking at the young woman strangely "A Pensieve is a Runic Bowl which focuses retrospective Divination, transforming a memory fragment into the images of an event which happened sometime in a person's past.

For example, I've seen the memory of you losing your virginity to Viktor Krum at the end of your fourth year, but as I wasn't personally at the event, I couldn't pull the memory from my own mind and watch it again."

Hermione spluttered at the casual mention of her sex life, and Tam looked over at her speculatively. "How does that prevent you pulling out memories of the future which you were present for yourself?" The redhead asked after the moment of contemplation.

"Because my travelling back in time destroyed the entire universe, therefore those events never occurred, and a Pensieve would not be able to Divine any happenings which have never happened.

This is why modifying memories is so fiendishly tricky to do to at a high enough standard to be worth doing at all. The modifier is forced

to modify the recollection of the event after it was Divined but before it was viewed, and then the modified version needs to be held in the Occluded mind separate from the original, non-modified version."

Hermione and Tam ignored most of that, correctly guessing that Luna had only added all the superfluous information to confuse them, in the hopes that they would become distracted, get headaches, and stop asking her things.

"Wait," the brunette stepped in "you destroyed the entire universe?"

"Meh," Luna waved it off negligently "I also turned poor younger Luna into a pile of gore. It turns out that the method I used to travel back in time stipulated that there couldn't be two of us walking around at the same time."

"So how did you travel back in time?" Tam asked.

Cocking her head to the side the woman sighed "There was a lot of Arithmancy involved. You two are girls so you wouldn't understand."

Entering the Owlery in search of Hedwig, Luna studiously ignored the twin glares and indignant comments which insinuated that she was a girl.

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Pocketing a Hand of Glory he intended as a gift for his son, Lucius Malfoy stepped out of Borgin and Burkes into a spartan Knockturn Alley. His wife would complain if she knew about it of course, Narcissa was forever telling him that he was spoiling the boy, but Draco was truly coming into his own in recent days so a present over and above the Firebolt rival he'd received for his birthday earlier that month, was not all that serious an issue.

Striding arrogantly between his two constant companions Lucius mused that the time spent playing host to the Dark Lord he'd been so dubious about, had changed Draco for the better. He was more focused and dedicated to his studies, and was finally applying the lessons which had been taught to the future Head of the Malfoy family in his youth. How to turn things in one's favour, skills at dealing with politicians and the axioms of good business. The real

things one must know and practice if they aspired to be a leader in this world rather than a follower.

Draco had finally started acting like a true Slytherin, and his father was more proud of the man he was becoming than he would ever be able to express.

There was a flap of white feathers and sharp talons dug deep, painful gouges into his shoulder. A "hoot" activated the familiar feeling of portkey activation. And Lucius found himself in what was clearly a woman's bedroom.

"-on't try to fight the feelin'
Because the thought alone is killing me right nooww..."

Were the words being sung out enthusiastically from the next room. Lucius was a Death Eater, and a fairly skilled one, so he did not take the apparently benign surroundings for granted. Especially due to the failure of both Apparating out of there, and activating his own emergency portkey. Someone had just kidnapped him and he would not take them lightly, so he drew his wand and stood in a professional duelling stance, patiently waiting to attack.

"Uh, thank god for mom and dad
For sticking two together
'Cause we don't know hooowww..."

Sang the remainder of the bouncy little verse, as an attractive blond woman came into the room dressed for sleep and singing into a hairbrush.

"Heee-ey Yaa-ah, ... Lucius." Came the cheerful greeting as he unloaded a rage fuelled Cruciatus. Or at least attempted to. After five perfectly cast and perfectly failed spells were attempted, the woman admonished "Now that is just plain rude Lucybear!"

"tiān xià wū yā yí yàng hēi"

The woman's hands came up, and the elder Malfoy's world went black.

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It had been more than a month since the arrival of time travelling Luna Liovegood, and her subsequent abduction of the Head of the Malfoy family. The man had not woken or stirred in the least since he'd been hit by whatever spell the blonde had used on him, for all intents and purposes he was deep within a magically induced coma despite Luna's protestations that it was nothing of the kind.

They had managed to wheedle some information from the woman, but in Tam's opinion she was even more annoying than Harry could be when he was intentionally attempting to be infuriating. Essentially Tam had learned that the war was lost because Voldemort actually was more powerful, more intelligent, better supplied, had more allies, and was considerably better at planning than they were.

From what Luna had said over the past several weeks, they had gathered that the Founder's Objects Voldemort had collected and turned into Soul Anchors, still had numerous active Enchantments on them. Not only was Godric the most magically powerful, but the Sword gave him superior battlefield enhancements in physical strength, perception and so on.

Basically this made him unnaturally capable in combat situations.

Only Luna had stated that Helga was the most dangerous, and after considerable effort they had eventually pinning her down as to the why of this statement. The Hufflepuff Cup's original use was primarily for Healing, and this property made Helga sane. Absolutely, one hundred percent, totally and completely, sane!

She would always do the thing which made the most sense, in every situation, and from Luna's vague description Tam had concluded that this truly was far more dangerous than it appeared at first glance. Helga seemed to be the kind of person who would just shoot James Bond at the first opportunity!

While she was not a Dark Lord herself, this concept actually offended Tam.

At one point in her memories she had wanted to be a Dark Lord. Only, what was the point of becoming a Dark Lord at all if you just shoot James Bond?

Visibly calming herself, Tam looked over the graveyard at Godric's Hollow for a long moment.

The rest of the Founder's Objects had other Enchantments which were each bad news for their side in their own ways. Not to mention that there was apparently some bleed through from having them walking around which gave Voldemort, who was the primary piece of Soul, a little extra edge he otherwise would not have had.

According to Luna nothing they could possibly try would succeed, and in the long run Voldemort was going to win.

Which was why they were here on the 31st of July, the anniversary of Harry Potter's birth, attempting to go through a variant of the same Ritual Voldemort had repeatedly gone through, on the off chance that Harry was not as dead as he appeared to be. Tam didn't think it was going to work, she'd tried to think of ways to attempt this herself, but the magic just wouldn't work like that.

You couldn't Heal death plain and simple.

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'Okay, Bone of an Ancestor; Lily Evens-Potter's femur, taken from her gravesite on the day of the Ritual.' Luna mentally checked off.

'Blood of an Adversary; Lucybear is nice and awake, screaming obscenities behind a Cone of Silence' She thought in approval. It was funny but this man was actually more potent an ingredient than Voldemort would have been, given that his son had killed Harry originally, he had been the one to force Harry into Azkaban, and had been the target of considerably more of his vitriol than anyone else.

'And lastly Flesh of a Servant; Bellatrix really is a darling. It's a shame she died in the Holy Forest Massacre, I hardly remember how sweet she was at all.' Luna finished her mental checklist, remembering the long conversation the previous evening getting the woman to promise not to chop off her entire hand despite making the Ritual slightly more likely to succeed. Bella had eventually conceded that filleting her Dark Mark into the rebirth potion was symbolic enough, and would have the added benefit of still being able to use both arms when fighting...

...Fighting for Harry, that was kind of the main point that needed addressing!

In order for the blonde's Ritual to work anyway.

Luna looked over to the redhead, who had some pretty serious doubts about this being possible. She could conceivably have told Tam that this was actually her future analogue's idea, however that would be nowhere near as fun as watching the woman spin herself out of shape, trying to figure out what the hell had happened once it worked.

In the other future, the expert on Horcrux magic had ultimately concluded that Albus had in reality been correct in his reasoning of Harry's scar, and that the proto-Horcrux soul fragment had entangled with Harry's soul. Only Horcruxes were Physical Objects, so when Draco had killed him, Harry's life had been anchored on this side of the Veil thanks to Voldemort's Horcrux, by hiding out inside his forehead.

All the diagnostics they had run on the corpse simply confirmed that his body was dead, and the stupid bastards had never even checked that his world famous scar, -you know, the one widely known to be involved in ground breaking soul magic- still contained soul energy.

Shaking her head at the idiocy Luna unceremoniously dumped her old friend's rotting carcass into the massive cauldron and signalled it was time for the show to get underway, High Noon being only a few minutes from now.

What sucked most about the old timeline was that by the time Tam figured out her mistake, Voldemort had already torched this place with Fiendfyre.

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'Right, where am I? And what in the hell happened? And why do I taste hot sauce?' Harry thought swimming in darkness. 'I was talking to that Vampire guy, and we had a few drinks. Oh yeah, we were attacked. Shit! Malfoy killed me, Lame!'

His eyes cracked open and he found himself standing stark bollock naked, up to his knees in a large cauldron, and with a fair sized crowd looking at him.

"Buenos dias cockbites, guess who's back!" was his opening comment, but it was for the most part ignored as everyone seemed to be staring, kind of lower than he was expecting. "Erm, Albus my eyes are up here you know?"

The old man had the grace to blush and Luna, who seemed to be on an Aging Potion for some reason, clearly fought back an outright laugh. Looking down at his body Harry noticed the reason for such undivided attention; he believed the medical term to be "priapism."

"Perhaps one of you could conjure me some pants?"

"No!" Bella wailed.

Lips quirking Harry asked "No?"

"You can't let that go to waste Harry!" She said.

"You are aware that you're nine years older than my mother would be right?" She shook her head as if to say 'I don't care' and Harry arched an eyebrow "You really want to do this?"

"Gods in heaven YES!" Bella screamed, and at his acquiescence grabbed onto his, well it wasn't his arm, Apparating the two away with a loud crack.

Some days it was just good to be alive.

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Lens of Sanity

"Wu Jen" is a D&D Character Class referenced in NoFP, but I've never played, nor do I speak Chinese, so feel free to wince painfully at my mistakes. Hands up anyone who recognised the pinyin incantations.

You've read Luna as a basket case spouting moonspeak and believing in imaginary creatures. You've read her as a Seer. Bungle had her using Loony as a defence mechanism. Darth Marrs is currently writing her as a sociopathic Escort Guard beautifully.

I've never read her as Chaotic Neutral and doing random crap just for the hell of it, so I'm tentatively claiming this is original ... maybe?

Hmm, perhaps I should start on some Fleur interaction that isn't just a bunch of jokes...

Chapter Sixteen: Let the Lord of Chaos Rule

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Strolling around Caerbannog on the first of August, Harry was lost in thought. Tamsyn really had outdone herself over what had apparently been the best part of four months. The Airship was looking great, clean lines and expansive corridors, albeit with a kind of modern gothic look, if that made any sense at all. It almost made Harry want to neglect giving her a huge ration of crap for emptying his entire trust vault. She'd done it before informing the world he had died and the Goblins had locked down his gold.

The gods alone how many ward stones had been employed expanding the internal space so extensively, and improving what he was still calling 'the flight deck' so it now had a gigantic window. The thing must have been a pretty involved Clearview Charm to look that good.

"From the freshly shagged smile plastered across Bellatrix' face, I'm guessing you were at it like the mighty Rabbit Animagus you always claim to be." Luna pointed out cheekily, coming across his meandering wanderings.

"I've told you before I prefer the term Vorpall Bunny." Harry replied pedantically. "Normal run of the mill rabbits cannot compare to an apex predator such as myself."

"That's another thing which has been bugging the crap out of me for years." She commented from his side "Did you know of the existence or necessity of Vorpall Weapons before you died, or was it a coincidence based of Hermione's stupid movie?"

"Oh yeah, Bella mentioned something about you travelling back in time from a future where Voldemort won." Harry said, failing to answer the question. "You saved her from a Jabberwock last month or something?"

Similarly ignoring his words Luna went on "And if I asked you nicely, would you tell me whether or not you have any kind of plan, or are just making things up on the fly and getting lucky?"

Some day's I've thought it was the first; such as the day I learned the unbridled usefulness of owning a mobile command centre like this Zeppelin. Whereas other day's I've thought you actually were just fucking with everyone, and my retarded time jump is nothing but a pipe dream with no real hope."

Mulling over the question for a while, Harry strolled down a spiral staircase "Tell me why you think I alone can win the war, and I'll answer you." He eventually threw out.

Luna concluded this was probably the best opportunity she would ever get at an honest answer. And because the question had been worming its way through her head for near a decade, she'd take it. "Two reasons. First, your being alive leaves the Hallows Magic unbroken..." She ignored his frown of incomprehension "Second, you and the Dark Lord have a pet Oracle named Sybil Trewlawny in that she can only produce True Prophecies about one of you or the other."

"So is it 'the power the Dark Lord knows not' bollocks or the 'marked him as his equal' horseshit, which has perked your interest?" Harry asked.

"Not a big fan of Divination and Fated Destiny?" Luna queried in amusement.

The recently resurrected Potter Heir chuckled "Let us just say that I am sceptical of any future which contains me."

Luna laughed outright at this statement "Well, that certainly goes in line with my reasoning Harry." After she got herself back under control she finished "There was a Prophecy, -more like an ancient legend in truth- which Sybil spoke out the instant you quote, unquote 'died.' Long story short I believe it was labelling you 'The Lord of Chaos.' Essentially it is my belief that anyone who is capable of defeating a Dark Lord using a combination of Hot Sauce and Intercourse, is someone who can end an unwinnable war in our favour."

'Lord of Chaos is a cooler sounding sobriquet than Boy-Who-Lived, and not as bog standard as Chosen One, I guess.' Harry concluded in his own mind.

Seeing Harry work his way through the Security Spells on a large hefty locker, scope around inside, and then promptly slam the metal door closed, Luna decided it was time to prompt a response.

"You promised to answer my question if I answered yours!"

"Hm?" Harry muttered clearly disturbed about something. "What did you want to know again?"

"Have you been using some kind of twisted plan, which involves scamming an Airship out of the Wizengamot, or are you making everything up at random just for the hell of it?"

"Oh. Can't it be both?" He said, possibly answering honestly.

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"She will not tell us a bloody thing!" Tam complained in a whiny frustrated voice.

Leading her down the same spiral staircase as earlier Harry smiled. "Language gone downhill recently I see." He taunted.

"Shut it, I'm serious!" seeing his mouth about to open she cut in "If you are about to make a stupid joke about your dogfather's name I will destroy your body using Fiendfyre!"

Lips quirking Harry asked "What's the problem really? You were never this uptight before."

She ignored him and his childish insinuations. "Did Luna tell you her method of time travel at least? I am fascinated by how she pulled it off, only she won't tell me because..."

"...girls can't do Arithmancy." Harry finished to her loud grunt of annoyance. "It's pretty straightforward, she was just trying to get a rise out of you..." She waved him to go on "...For reasons I'm not going to get into, the earliest jump point she could get was the instant she heard my new Lord of Chaos prophecy, meaning that the temporal transit coordinates were fixed. Following?"

"Okay." Tam responded with knitted brows.

"The main problem was that she needed to get the spatial coordinates to within 40 light seconds, otherwise she would not be close enough to her younger body to magically latch on and burst through."

"Forty light seconds? That is quite a long way, much longer than the diameter of the earth." The redhead protested.

"True. However the earth is rotating on its axis, as well as around the Sun. Our Solar System is located on the western spiral arm of the Galaxy, and is itself rotating around the central black hole. And gods alone knows how far or fast the Milky Way is moving from the central explosion which happened 14 billion years ago."

The woman stayed silent for a while digesting this. "And you are saying Luna somehow worked out the physical distance travelled between where her 25 year old self was, and where her 15 year old self had been? And she managed it to within an insanely small margin? Even with magic that sounds completely impossible!"

Coming on the same room as earlier Harry finished "She says she had a full year, four Masters, and a stolen supercomputer. But yeah, kinda badass." Opening the sturdy metal door of the locker his eyes narrowed dangerously "Now will you please explain exactly what THIS is doing in my Airship!"

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Hermione was having a good day and she was looking forward to seeing Harry again now that he was alive once more. Ever since she had learned that her future self seemed to have a Phoenix, she had done the obvious thing, and researched the Hogwarts Library. As well as her own Library aboard Caerbannog, for everything she could find on Phoenixes.

Hermione shivered in pleasure, as she did everytime the thought of owning her own library passed through her mind.

Anyway, what she had learned from her research, and from a few discussions she'd had with a helpful Professor Dumbledore, and a far less helpful Luna Lovegood, was that Phoenixes were kind of maniacs. And they search the earth for the kinds of even tempered, peaceful, and all round good people to bond themselves too. This

helped the immortal avians stave off the desire to go berserk and kill everybody apparently.

She had always thought of herself as a good person, but to learn that you would one day be ratified by a creature of light and goodness gave her a warm fuzzy feeling which brought a wide smile to her face each time it occurred to her.

A smile a little like THAT actually, she decided passing Bellatrix in the hallway with a shake of the head. Putting the thought aside Hermione continued on her search for Harry.

So the other thing she had learned about Phoenixes, which she hadn't known until the Headmaster had shared his suspicions, was that they seemed to remember everything they had ever done, and everything they would ever do, from their first hatching until they presumably died. That was if Phoenixes could die at all, as nobody was ever able to confirm or deny the possibility.

This meant that Fawkes knew, and had always known, that he would one day lose Dumbledore and bond Hermione as his familiar. Yeah, the Headmaster said that it was more like owning a cat than a dog, in that the witch or wizard bonded to a Phoenix was the pet, and the Phoenix was the snooty overly opinionated master.

He'd smiled when he said it, but still... weird.

Regardless, it was this understanding which had prompted Luna to have Hermione call her once and future Familiar, and have the bird fireflash them to the battle zone. Knowing, even if Hermione did not, that Fawkes would probably heed the call and aid them.

Then there were the problems of multiple timelines, varying possibilities, and of course time travel to take into account. But Hermione eventually gave up understanding these things as they gave her one monster of a headache, and Luna was the only one who would discuss the possibilities with her at any length.

Moving down a spiral staircase she overheard muffled voices, and headed toward them to investigate.

"It's disgusting is what it is!" She overheard the distinctive voice of her oldest friend.

Protesting, the sounds of Tam emanated through the metal door. "It's not that bad really, I mean-"

She cut off as Hermione walked into the room and the two span with panicked looks of their faces, slamming a metal locker closed looking guilty.

"What's in the locker?" She asked, quite reasonably.

There was a trapped expression on Harry face, and a low audible sigh was let out from the redhead. "Pornography." She stated wearily "Sorry, it's just... you know?"

Harry just ran his hands through his hair and took up the explanation. "Yeah, it's Luna's stash. I mean, I'm into some weird stuff, but that girl is just something else." He confessed awkwardly.

Thinking back to an overheard conversation between the Luna and Tonks, and how they were discussing whether or not they should attempt to raise one of those tentacle monsters the young Auror was forever reading about, Hermione just nodded.

Deciding that she could visit with Harry another time, Hermione simply left her friends too it.

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As soon as the door swung closed behind Hermione, Harry threw up as powerful a locking spell as he could, and then added a Dome of Silence for good measure. At the same instant Tam went with something called 'the Shroud of Athena' which did essentially the same thing only with powerful Dark Magic.

"That was close." Harry said.

"Yeah." Tam agreed "Thanks, by the way, she really wouldn't understand."

"No." He agreed. "What were you thinking though, I mean look at it!" Harry said, gesturing to the locker's contents.

"It reduces the drain on Caerbannog's reservoirs and wells by over forty percent."

Eyes bulging he exploded "Forty?"

"Yeah, I went a little overboard with the amount of magic added to the airship, and it was becoming dangerous. Hell, the Fire-Friend rune set on the hydrogen cells would start to degrade in less than a week of constant flight. I had to come up with something!"

Looking over the tubes running into and out of the thing, Harry asked "Where did you get it? Please don't tell me you-"

"Of course not!" She interrupted "There was a Dementor attack, and it was practically dead anyway. Right?"

"Kissed?" Tam nodded "I can see why you didn't tell Hermione."

"She has a really strong magical core for her age." Tam informed. "And it's getting stronger with use."

Running his finger along the nutrient tubes and down to the enchanted metal entering the solar plexus, Harry just sighed. "If Hermione ever finds out my Airship is powered by a forsaken child, we'll never hear the end of it."

"I know, I know" She paused looking over the young girl one last time "Her name was Stacy if you are interested."

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Luna came into the Duelling Pit on the back of her ostrich-racehorse abomination and took in Harry getting his arse handed to him by the far superior redhead. What made him think he would stand a chance was anyone's guess, being as he was four months behind on practice, and even before that had been losing more often than winning against Tam.

Jumping down from what had not yet been named a Chocobo, Luna set about creating a temporary magical energy field called a Seal, which all practitioners of Wu Jen use in place of a wand as a focus for their casting.

Vertical line of 'Metal' element was slashed into the universe using her left hand, then bisected on the horizontal twice using 'Fire' and her right. Once the Seal was in place Luna set about unloading a rapid fire barrage of offensive magic through the Foci; flames, battering hammers of air, and sharpened knives of scarlet inferno.

The vast majority of her magic was accessed nonverbally, given how it was only in the last three hundred years ago or so, that Incantations had started being added to the ancient magical style. Hell, the vast majority of practitioners nowadays used a wand for most of their casting anyway, because of the speed increase and the superior ease of use.

Still, Tamsyn had never been confronted with magic of this type, and so she was turtling behind her shields, fearful of being caught by something dangerous. The let up on the redhead's offence gave Harry the opportunity to get back in the game, and it was but a handful of seconds later before the two of them had her trussed up and defenceless.

"Nice one Luna, that little scamp was starting to get a bit too big for her britches!" Harry commented.

Looking at her body closely and noting how the ropes kept her back arched and dug into her clothing revealingly, Luna nodded "I think we should leave her up there for a while" then pinched her arse, to a Silenced glare of furious embarrassment.

Taking a lounging seat on the far side of the room the two got comfortable and idly watched Tam's frustrated attempts to escape. "Out of interest, how long did it take before she betrayed our side?"

"What does it matter? There is a good reason I don't really talk about the other timeline." At Harry's shaken head and eyebrow raise, Luna just huffed. "Honestly she's not that bad, she was just offered something she really, really wanted. And in her defence, she didn't defect at all until after Hermione died."

'Ah, so that's why Tam was so uptight and grumpy.' Harry mused, realisation dawning. "Come on then, what was she offered?"

There was a grunt of protest but the mid-twenties Luna eventually capitulated. "You know she has pretty crippling thanatophobia correct? I mean, pants pissing, night terrors, that kind of thing."

"It's really that bad? Man she hides it well."

"I think the Dark Lord is actually worse than she is, but Tam is still absolutely terrified of dying." Luna confirmed "Once erm-, Voldemort. Huh, no Taboo... weird. Anyway, once Voldemort had basically taken over, he tracked down the Flamel's, murdered them, and stole the world's only Philosopher's Stone."

Harry frowned at this but didn't interrupt.

"And saying as he was already an Immortal so didn't need it, he offered Elixir of Life as a reward to all of those who carried the Dark Mark. Being a Death Eater had a bunch of other perks of course, they were virtually above the law, and were essentially allowed to kill or do whatever they pleased to any normal citizen without consequence. But it was the promise of health and long life which brought the Dark Lord so many eager followers."

Harry thought it over and decided that the plan really was quite brilliant. If Voldemort alone knew the location of the Philosopher's Stone, then he could ensure an even tighter loyalty. The threat of pain was one thing, but loss of immortality was something else entirely.

"What was the price Tam had to pay for the Elixir? Voldemort wouldn't have invited her back with open arms, so she was forced to do something."

"She killed Frost. It's funny, but the Vampires were quite lacklustre in their support of the Dark Lord up until that point."

Harry was surprised to hear that, and he spent a long moment considering his sole meeting with the man.

Interrupting his musings Luna asked "You suspected she would defect the whole time?"

"Huh?" Harry said snapping back to the present. "Oh, well she's the consummate Slytherin. If the war was virtually over there would be

little reason for her to stay on our side." Watching a familiar head of chestnut hair enter and take in the scene, he reflected 'Unless...'

Glaring over at Harry and Luna, Hermione went over to the trussed girl and performed a number of diagnostic spells. Transfiguring a silver dagger she eased the redhead's form firmly together to give herself enough slack, and then sliced the ropes freeing her.

Face flushed with "anger" Tam extracted herself from the tangle of limbs, and lead the brunette out of the Duelling Pit. Harry asked "You did that on purpose so they'd be forced to share some free touching didn't you?"

With an unaccustomedly innocent expression on her face, Luna replied. "I have no idea what you are suggesting Harry."

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Harry was smashing his head up against a wall with this ridiculous turn of events.

He was being forced to sit his friggin' O.W.L.s even though he'd been dead three days ago!

And what was worse was that the examiner had posed a question which was based on a blatantly flawed assumption. It was only impossible to know both the location and velocity of a problem's solution if one was measuring it Arithmentically from inside the Universe! Measure from outside and you're fine.

How were these idiots qualified to measure his level of competence if they couldn't even pose questions which made sense?

Harry didn't know it but his Aura was flaring menacingly, and he was scaring the living crap out of the examination board, who had all kindly agreed to give up their weekend to test him. It really was his own fault of course, back at the beginning of the year he had forced the Wizengamot into caving to his demands. One of which was that he'd be emancipated, given Sovereignty over his Potter Family Ring, and accompanying governmental Seat, as soon as he and Tam had completed their O.W.L.s.

Which Tam had done while Harry was playing worm chow at Godric's Hollow, and now he was forced to sit through this crap before the two of them could cash in on the concessions which he'd already obtained.

He was sitting an O.W.L. in Defence Against the Dark Arts, Magical Theory, Runes, Transfiguration, Charms, Potions (just to fuck with Snape), and Care of Magical Creatures. That last Harry was actually incredibly gifted at, thanks to his innate ability to see their weak points, and natural capacity to understand what needed to be done to slay them. Most of his answers had been along the lines of 'refrain from doing do this, that, or the other, and you'll be fine.'

He'd also sat an O.W.L. in Dark Arts even though Albus had specifically asked him not to. 'Screw him!' summed up Harry's response to that nicely.

Now he was on his last exam Arithmancy, and the borderline overdose of Pepper-Up and Invigoration Draught he been using to get through them all in one sitting was beginning to get to him. Hence the barely concealed desire to attempt Fiendfyre against the stupid, ignorant examiner who was foolish enough to ask him an objectionable question!

With four months less study time than he'd expected Harry could be described as being, maybe just a tad, stressed.

Maybe.

So long as you didn't say it to his face.

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While Harry was sleeping off the Raw Carrot, Amortentia, and Scotch Hellfire Sauce medley he'd consumed following the testing binge, -read 'sleeping off' as; 'in a coma'- and Bellatrix was spending quality time with her brother in law with Harry's consent, the rest of the crew were sitting around discussing what they were intending to do next.

Hermione had taken to tying her hair up in recent days, for some reason that she couldn't quite recall, but it made her look older and so she liked it. Regardless, she walked into the relaxed main room

of the Caravel of Caerbannog and took the only remaining seat, which quite by happenstance was situated right next to Tamsyn.

Hermione had found herself enjoying the woman's company in the time spent together since Luna had gained ten years. The two of them equally frustrated with the blonde woman's attitude, forming a kind of bond of friendship which the bookish young woman had rarely found outside of Harry and their run in with a mountain troll. And outside of Luna and the shocking -cat out of the bag- realisation that she actually understood the nature of magic better than Hermione did, only had been at first hiding the fact behind the guise of spurious creatures.

"This coming Wednesday Lord Potter and Lady Riddle will be introduced to the Wizengamot and are scheduled to assume their hereditary Seats." Dumbledore said once they were all comfortable. "Perhaps we should discuss any political movements the Light side intends to make on the day."

"I'm still not certain I like the idea of Harry having political power." Hermione stated "It just seems wrong on so many levels!"

That got a little chuckle. "We have the Black, Potter, and Riddle votes from the old family seats. My support as Chief Warlock gains us another, as does a further four of my light sided political allies. Which totals eight out of fifty-one we can be of the most assured."

"For a core voting bloc that is quite impressive, however we now know that Amelia Bones is in fact Helga. Meaning that a fair amount of what we could normally call on is now suspect." Sirius commented.

"True," said Tam "however we know she is our enemy thanks to a time traveller of all things. And so long as we know, but she does not know that we know, then we know that we should be able to work with her. Probably. For the time being at least."

'If we know, that she doesn't know that we know?' Working through the overly complicated sentiment, Hermione was about to speak, but was interrupted by Luna. "In all honesty, Helga is a pain in the arse. I wouldn't be surprised if she had a contingency plan in place, in the event of a Zombie Apocalypse."

They were aware Luna wasn't joking, so this comment elicited a few groans.

Dumbledore took the time to mull this over, before going on "I suggest our primary purpose this coming Wednesday's meeting should be..."

They spent the remainder of that morning and most of the afternoon working out a strategy.

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Things were beginning to wind down so Tam smiled over at Hermione and squeezed her hand briefly before looking over to the blonde "Luna, while I realise it is your policy not to answer any of our questions, I am interesting in whether or not you ultimately worked out the purpose of that Runic Array you were so obsessed with."

The woman grimaced, but she did answer "Yes I did, however you must not tell Harry, even if he asks."

"Why shouldn't we tell Harry?" Sirius asked "If he has a right to know, we shouldn't keep it from him. You know how much he hates people doing that."

The room nodded, Harry could become quite irritating to people who hide things from him. "Remember when he found out that the Troll being Brazilian Minister of Magic was just a hoax made up to help sell sunglasses?"

"Yeah." Padfoot confirmed confusedly.

"And Harry got really disappointed and started moping about for days, remember?" Luna pushed on.

"Okay, what's that got to do with your Array thing?"

She sighed "The problem is it won't work. If Harry finds out what it does he'll get really enthusiastic about it, and in the end will wind up completely disappointed and mooney."

"Riiight, now I have definitely got to know its purpose!" Tam stated, both hands flat on the table leaning over to her.

"Oh for heaven's sake. Fine!" Luna gave in "It was a six hundred and sixty six point Runic Cascade which would take the Blood Protection Guardian present in Harry's blood, and sacrifice it in favour of resurrecting Lily Potter." She breathed all at once. "The idea being that because Voldemort did not die when she sacrificed her life, Lily did not fully die ether, and was held in an ethereal Limbo state anchored to this side of the Veil by Harry's blood."

Eyes closed and refusing to be interrupted Luna continued "Essentially there were two competing Rituals fighting one another; Voldemort's Horcrux Ritual, and whatever Mrs. Potter did back in the eighties. What I came up with when I was fourteen was a way to untangle the two Rituals, and 'get a refund' so to speak, on the price she paid."

There was a thunderous silence at these impossible words. "And that was possible?" Sirius asked astonished.

Sighing again Luna went on drearily "It required uniting the Hallows," she laughed bleakly "meaning I must have recognised them subconsciously when I was younger and not realised it. But yes, it was possible."

Seeing the animagus getting worked up at this idea Tam cut in "Yet you said it would not work."

"Fundamentally no it wouldn't. Harry doesn't have his own blood running through his veins, but that of Lucius Malfoy thanks to his recent time spent, y'know dead. We could have theoretically used Voldemort's, however Amelia Bones' blood is running through his body rather than Harry's. And most damning of all, was the fact that the Blood Protection Guardian which my Runic Array relied upon, had died while Harry was incarcerated in Azkaban."

The news had an instantly sobering effect on everyone in the room. It was in a small way, like they had just lost a friend all over again.

Speaking from his position leaning casually against the doorway, Harry said "I think it is about time we have a conversation on the subject of your original plan Albus."

Everyone snapped their gaze toward the raven haired man in his faux relaxed posture.

"I was willing to let sleeping dogs lie, but now my mother's life is involved and I need to know."

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore was one hundred and fifteen years old. He had been awarded an Order of Merlin, First Class for his defeat of the Dark Lord Gellert Grindelwald during the forties. He was the Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards, as well as the Chief Warlock of the British Wizengamot. He was the Grand Sorcerer of the International Federation of Warlocks, and was rightly considered by many to be the wisest and most powerful man seen in many generations.

Yeah, thanks to Harry's comments...

...Albus looked like he was about to shit himself.

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Lens of Sanity

Lord Hadrian Black gave me a frackin awesome review ... "This story is by far the most .. fucked up thing I have ever had the pleasure of reading" and it caused me to spit a big gob of larger all over my laptop ... It may or may not be quoted on my newly rewritten profile page ;-]

Anyway, I go to tremendous lengths to make sure everything gets through canon, but Hot Sauce, Chocobos, and a Zeppelin? Pirate voice Voldemort? ... If I claim this is NOT a crackfic would it be true?

Chapter Seventeen: Stick to the Code

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Dumbledore had asked for a couple of days and Harry had said that was fine, it should give the Headmaster enough time to get his original notes together. Now he and Bellatrix were walking side by side into the polished white building of Gringotts Wizarding Bank, with Harry under a terribly cast glamour charm. It was the kind that even the most passive onceover would detect with ease.

"Thief, ye hav' bin war'ned" Harry muttered in an old timey pirate voice, reading the plaque aloud. If this worked, it was going to be awesome.

"Good evening filthy servant creature, I am the astoundingly inbred, erm, well bred, Lucius Malfoy. And I command you to lead me to my family Vault. Avast!" The Goblin looked at him incredulously, and under the aristocratic glamour Harry went on "Hop, you will move lickedy-split or will face my shaft, erm, cane, across you filthy behind!"

Predictably the Goblin waved over to a number of his kin, and after a whispered conversation several senior looking employees, escorted him and Bellatrix deep within the Bank. By this point the Goblins and everyone else knew of Lucius' disappearance, so they would be on guard in case of an Imperius Curse. And just as predictably the defence which would have shaken that very spell from Harry, had he been under its effects, was utilised against him during the cart trip.

The atrocious glamour flickered visibly, but Harry just smiled benignly at the creatures watching, and continued down into the cavernous bank.

Slashing his hand with the supplied dagger, Harry placed it on the large Vault door, and it opened. Thereby proving he was a Malfoy, and had full access rights to the high security chamber. The Gringotts Goblins had of course allowed him this far into their domain, in the hopes that the obvious thief would be killed horribly by the Vault's protections. And as such were clearly surprised that the man actually had authorisation to be there.

They were surprised and more than a little disappointed. Goblins didn't get to watch foolish wandusers die on a regular basis unfortunately.

It took almost an hour to fill all the magically expanded sacks, but when the Vault was bare of all but a few haphazard piles of Knuts, the two climbed aboard the cart and returned to the surface. They exited the building, and with a whispered "Caerbannog" to their wrists, Harry and Bellatrix activated their portkeys, landing safely in the ship's Atrium.

"Can you fucking believe that worked?" Harry exploded after a moment.

Bellatrix just giggled.

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Wearing one of those 'Support Harry Potter : Everyone Else Stinks!' badges from fourth year, Harry stepped into the Headmaster's Office. It was time to get through this.

Harry had known something weird had been going on for a while now, and had even been using it throughout the year. Dumbledore had always been acting kind of guiltily toward him, and it was that reason the old man had essentially been letting him do whatever in the hell he felt like while at school.

Well, guilt and the fact that Harry was pretty much doing what Dumbledore wanted him to be doing anyway, for the most part. Those things being; stay in the Castle, become stronger, and don't kill Snape. Possibly in that order.

Luna's offhand comment about the Philosopher's Stone pissed him off though. Until she mentioned it he'd actually thought the thing had been at Hogwarts, and he had achieved something back in first year. When now those little obstacles, kind of obviously, had been a setup.

"I understand you can now boast of performing the sole successful attempt at burglarising Gringotts Wizarding Bank." Albus said, not really chastising. Removing resources from a known enemy was standard practice in wars after all.

"Honestly, if people stopped thinking things were impossible, they'd come up with the same kinds of solutions as I do." Harry confirmed. Then he sat for an extended moment in silence. "You were banking on my death."

The bland, not even accusatory statement, landed squashily. Exactly like the big steaming pile of manure it truly was.

"Harry I-" He began.

"I've known for ages, its fine." Harry interrupted, waving it off. "I was, and am, a Horcrux. I had to die or he couldn't. I just want to know the original plan, there was some reason I had to go to the Dursley's, only I never asked because I didn't want to know your plan until now."

Dumbledore spent a long time enjoying the flavour of his favourite candy. Sometimes the twitch response ritual he had performed in his youth was a burden he could do without, but sometimes a dependence on sugar could provide one time to think. Or in this case, postpone the inevitable.

"Lily Potter was a member of the Order of the Phoenix as you well know." Dumbledore began "When the Death Eaters began targeting you specifically because of the Prophecy, Lily was the one who tracked down the Fidelius Charm which was intended to hide your family. You have heard that your mother was especially gifted at Charms I assume?"

"Yes." He didn't comment further.

"Lily cast the Charm and the Potters switched Secret Keepers at the last minute. With such disastrous results."

Harry nodded, that was Dumbledore's way of informing him that he truly hadn't known Sirius was innocent. Something which he and Padfoot had never been one hundred percent on.

"She also did something else. I do not know what, but Ms. Lovegood concluded it had been a Ritual, and I would hazard she is correct in that assumption." Dumbledore said, subconsciously stalling for time. "There are no two ways about it, whatever Lily had done was

decidedly Dark. Researching human sacrifice rituals could not be viewed any other way."

"Magic is about intent." Harry put in. "There is no Light or Dark, at least not really."

When he nodded but did not go on, Harry huffed.

"Get on with it Albus."

"I weaponized it." He said, "I turned the sacrificial shield into a weapon. If you were to willingly give your life to protect another, the Ritual effects your mother had employed with such success would be repeated. My intention was that several of your friends would all receive the Guardian against Voldemort's magic, and they would in turn dispatch him."

"And to do this I was anchored to Privet Drive?" Harry asked.

"Correct; your blood, your aunt's blood, and your cousin's blood. All carried the altered form, and so long as you spent at least some time living together each year, the plan could go ahead. Once you turned seventeen the change would have been permanent, and you could be sent against Voldemort when he inevitably regained a body."

Dumbledore hung his head and Harry mulled over what he'd heard.

"That's brilliant!" he surprisingly shouted after a moment.

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"What?" Dumbledore exploded in disbelief.

"Hell I'd have done the same thing if I'd thought of it." Harry admitted. "Dark Lords need killing, you know that better than most saying as you defeated one yourself. But the brilliant part of it is that there are still two people wandering around who have been touched by my mother's sacrifice. Meaning that Luna's Array still has an honest shot at working."

"What?" Dumbledore couldn't believe his ears. He'd never been at such a loss for words in almost a hundred years, maybe ever. When

his mind reengaged, Albus pointed out a flaw in Harry's reasoning "Unfortunately the Blood Protection around Privet Drive fell while you were in Azkaban."

"Those badass Wards fell yes." The teenager agreed. "However the kinds of archaic magic involved leave a deeper imprint than that, it's worth a shot!"

"Harry yo-" The old man began.

The young boy ordered "Grab your notes, let's get to the Room of Requirement and dig into this thing."

Shouting after his retreating back the Headmaster cautioned "Harry it is not going to work!"

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"Harry it's not going to work!" Luna screeched in exasperation, before unknowingly voicing Tam's thoughts from the day of Harry's rebirth "You cannot Heal death pure and simple."

"Of course it is." He mulishly attested "Think of the Trials we've gone through. How could it possibly not work?"

This gave the blonde pause, and even Dumbledore halted what he was doing, in light of the statement.

"What do you mean Trials?" Hermione asked in confusion.

"Fine Harry, let me look over Albus' notes. I'll have a look to see if it's even theoretically possible." At his wide smile Luna scowled "Do not get your hopes up, I still don't think it's going to work."

"What are you talking about?" Hermione demanded.

"Thanks Luna you're the best!"

"Hello?" Hermione said "Can anyone hear me?" Shaking Tam, the redhead looked through her "Am I invisible or something?"

Harry finally looked over at the bushy haired Griffindor "Sorry about that Hermione. What's the problem?"

"Trials? What are you talking about, the word sounded capitalised." She asked.

Harry blinked a few times before sharing a look with Tam. "You have never even heard of the concept before?" the redhead half asked, half stated in surprise.

"Seriously?" Harry repeated the sentiment. Hermione got that, 'I'm going to start Hexing people' look on her face so he tried to explain "Erm-, I'm not sure I am the best at describing it..." noticing her eyes narrow Harry continued "...but I'll try." Seeing him standing dumbly for a long while, Tam just pushed him out of the way.

"Say you want to learn, I don't know, Animagus Transformation or something..." Hermione nodded "...and you went to the library, found a book straight away, and began practicing steadily in order to turn into an animal." Tam said. "Well it would work, and one way or another you would eventually succeed. However let us say that there wasn't a book in the Library, and there wasn't someone like Professor McGonagall around who could teach you.

Instead you learn that the only book which will teach you what you want to know is in the Magical section at the Library of Congress in the United States. And you have to sell a prized possession in order to afford the portkey. Even worse, once you got there, and found the book you were searching for, you were forced to fight someone else who was looking for exactly the same book you were."

Hermione frowned. "Well the second way sounds like a lot of extra trouble for no real benefit."

"No!" Harry and Tam both wailed.

The redhead continued "There is all the difference in the world! The second way you have gone through many challenges and setbacks, proving that the magic you are seeking is of some high value to you. Those challenges are known as Trials. In the second scenario you would become an Animage in no time at all, the magic would sing and leap from your fingertips. You would command an understanding of the process to such an extent that it would barely even be the same thing as in the first scenario."

"In fact," Harry added his opinion "Animagus Transformation is a very good example. Take me for instance. Did I learn from a wise old master? Did I learn in order to help one of my friends with his monthly medical condition? Did I go through the mediation exercises, or partial transfiguration?

No! I cheated, using my worthless gold to purchase a Ritual of Release. Merlin save me, I didn't even bother to brew the Potions myself, I got someone else to do it." Harry paused "I bet you anything I'd have been a Panther if I'd done it properly!" Harry concluded, for the first time annoyed that he'd taken the shortcuts.

Hermione mulled it over in silence for a long time, with the other two just watching for her reaction. "This is a real thing?" they both nodded "I thought you liked your Animagus form."

Harry laughed "The bunny is just a bunny. It's me that makes it Vorpal."

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"Gods it's everywhere now that you've pointed it out!" Hermione declared "I mean, you cannot do Solid Shields despite them being incredibly simple, albeit power intensive." Harry scowled at her but she barely noticed. "Yet you have such control of your wandless abilities that I have seen you transfigure six Cornish Pixies from peanuts, ten times in a row perfectly, and have them all spring into being already under Compulsion."

Harry's scowl faded at her recognition of his awesomeness.

"And that is because Sirius was trying to teach you Solid Shields for reasons you did not fully appreciate. Whereas your wandless ability came from time spent in Azkaban Prison, and necessity. Furthermore your first wandless animal transfiguration was used to save the life of the woman you are in love with."

"Gah!" Harry exploded "What have I said about people saying that? It isn't true no matter how many times you say it."

Ignoring the comment Hermione continued on her train of thought. "You! That's why you did it." She span, pointing at her messy haired

friend. "This is the same reason you made the magical community build you an Airship."

"I don't know..." Luna said coming over "...I find it hard to believe Harry had such altruistic motivations on that score."

Seeing as how Luna had apparently finished going over the preliminary notes, Harry asked "Was I right?"

"No," she said "no you bloody weren't okay, shut the hell up."

"Ah so you are saying I was correct," Harry concluded "and you were being a narrow minded fool just like everyone else."

"Shut up Harry."

"Come on, what's the damage?" he asked in high spirits.

"It's fucking impossible, give it up." Luna stated, and because Harry just looked at her without blinking until she said it, answered "0.002 percent probability okay, happy now? It will not work!"

Closing his idiosyncratic green eyes he began to pace, then snapped attention to his time travelling companion "It wasn't 0.00214 percent by any chance?"

"Er-, yeah. Why?" she asked.

"Because that is one sixth to the power of six"

The blonde blinked a few times and went through the calculation in her head "Bloody fucking hell, it's going to work isn't it!"

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A huge shadow was cast, obscuring the afternoon sunlight on a quiet suburban street in Surry. A place which once was the home of the single most awesome individual ever born to a man or woman, or at least that was how Harry liked to think of it. The shadow was being cast by his home, a mighty and imposing sky fortress. A fortress which was known the world over as the Caravel of Caerbannog, thanks to Harry's high profile name and reputation.

Each of the houses on this street, monotonously named Privet Drive, were absolutely identical. The roofs were the exact same shade of red, each of the gardens were precisely as well maintained as one another, and the houses all had an identical disinfected look of lifelessness that screamed 'lower middle class hellhole.'

That was of course, with one sole exception; Number Four.

Harry now knew why pretty innocent Bella had been acting so nervous all day.

"Well?" He asked pointedly, to his beautiful purple eyed companion.

"Maybe it was a 'lektikal thing?" She supplied "You know how these muggles are with their dangerous technology and things."

Harry looked over the Fiendfyre scorch marks. "Now don't get me wrong Bella dear, electricity can be very dangerous, I will readily admit that fact. However it does not leave damage as extensive and irreparable as what we are looking at this afternoon."

"Come on!" She whined "They were so horrible to you. You cannot expect me to just let that slide can you?"

"When did you do it?" Harry asked.

Flopping onto the blackened grass which once framed the precious roses he had invested so many hours in, Bella replied "About six hours after I was broken out of Azkaban."

"So my mother truly is dead." Harry sighed.

Lifting his wrist portkey and obviously about to leave, Bellatrix interrupted "I only got the walrus Animagus and his spawn." Seeing Harry drop his arm, she continued "The horsy housewife you told me about was not home."

"There is an incredibly good reason being around you always makes me smile Bella dear. A very good reason indeed."

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"So let me get this straight..." Hermione stated a little over a week later "...you actually believe this is a positive turn of events, due to the fact that it will make our lives harder?"

"You appear to be new to this concept Ms. Granger," Dumbledore added, stroking his mighty white beard "however those of us raised around magic take it as a matter of course."

"This is totally crazy!" she insisted "Luna, you're on my side right? An incredible number of people died doing this in the original timeline."

The blonde with the perfectly chiseled ass kind of looked uncertain. "The thing is Hermione, you are relying on crappy information. Yes, the Holy Forest Massacre happened because a small force infiltration got caught out by the Jabberwock. But this small force infiltration knows about the Jabberwock, and is attacking exactly the same fortification as the other force, using exactly the same members ... for completely different reasons."

"But they are still going to die! It's obvious." The muggleborn attested.

Tam took her hands and gazed deeply into her, brown eyes meeting brown eyes "The intent and circumstances are different." She said "Remember Trials, this is the same thing. Intent is important, and we need to capture/rescue Petunia Dursley née Evans who happens to be behind those same protections."

"I can't believe this is happening just the same way as Luna said it happened before, and none of you care!" she screamed "Fine, Mrs. Dursley was captured and her blood used to prevent Harry from having any advantage over Voldemort, but come on! It's still a trap, and we are still all going to die!"

They did not reply to her accusations.

"Hermione," Harry said "the odds that I will successfully resurrect my mother are a sixth to the power of six! The more challenges we face moving toward that end, the better. You do not need to aid us, perhaps this is the event which Fawkes has witnessed, and it will be the reason for your bonding of a Phoenix."

"I don't want all my friends to die!" she screamed "We can come up with a better plan."

"..." everyone in listening distance commented.

"Hermione?"

"Yes Harry. I am listening."

"I'm a Vorpall Bunny. I've always been destined to slay a Jabberwock. Do not worry, I've got this."

She gave him a hug, and everything that she loved about her friend was poured into it. It was a new experience for Harry, and Hermione was quite drained by the overt showing of emotion. Harry would win, she knew it, it would happen. Fuck logic, fuck the universe, Hermione Granger was swearing, and she would settle for nothing less than Harry winning the day!

'Bring it on universe, Hermione Granger was out for blood.'

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Five days before Harry Potter's first affectionate hug, an event that - by the way- stayed with him for the rest of his days, and contributed toward his eventual dedication to the cause. Well it found them discussing the topic of Lily Potter's mostly impossible rebirth.

And they were doing so without the help of Hermione because she was in a huff with Bellatrix unrepentant treatment of the Dursleys. Or perhaps it was because she had been informed Lucius Malfoy was 'sleeping with Stacy,' presumably an unusual euphemism for 'they killed him' which Hermione did not appreciate.

"So in conclusion; you have defeated a Troll, fought through a spurious maze, and dispatched a Dark Lord at eleven. Slain a Basilisk at twelve. Spent a year messing with an army of Dementors at thirteen. Killed a Dragon, fought off possession, and defeated a Sphinx at fourteen. Become Captain on an Airship, made peace with the Vampires, and survived your own death at fifteen. And now are intending to slay an unstoppable monster, in order to rescue a "princess," which may allow you to resurrect your deceased mother at sixteen?"

"That sounds about right, for a brutally stripped down version of events anyway." The sexy sole survivor of a Killing Curse replied.

"Bloody hell Harry, even Merlin didn't have a rap sheet like that on his death bed! And he even had the time travel on there for goodness sake!"

"What can I say Tam, my awesomeness knows no bounds." Harry replied modestly. "So what do we know about Vorpall weapons?"

"I have discovered something fascinating on further researching the creature," Albus informed "the last person to slay a Jabberwock was in fact..."

"...my paternal grandmother." Luna finished.

"...Alice Lovegood." Albus said at the same instant.

Harry, Sirius, Tam, and Bellatrix all looked over at the blonde woman. "You know about Vorpall weaponry Luna? Like, more than just having come across it in the future?" Harry asked.

"Oh yes, Gramma Alice went so far as to show me her sword once. I'd have loved to learn how to do it, but she said I was too young when I asked."

"Explain."

"I'm guessing you have read Lewis Carroll's book Harry?" She asked with an eyebrow raised.

"Of course, but that is just muggle fiction."

"No, it isn't." Luna insisted "Lewis Carroll was a muggleborn Arithmancer named Charles Dodgson, and he was a friend of my Grandmother. He named the main character after her once she told him the true story of her killing a Jabberwock."

"So you're saying that it is based on a true story?" Tam asked in amazement.

"What? No! Hardly at all, he simply named the main character Alice after his friend. Who happened to be my grandmother."

"So do you know how to create a Vorpall weapon Luna?" Harry asked after a time.

"Unfortunately not," she admitted "nevertheless I can forge Valyrian Steel which is similar, if only around half as effective. Although we might not want to do that because the Goblin Treaties cover any transmuting of metals in such a way, and if they find out that we are creating it we will be in the same position as people they discover counterfeiting gold."

Seeing Harry was about to ask Tam interrupted "They send an army after you. The Goblins are at a constant state of war with counterfeiters, if this is covered by the same laws we will need to think twice and again before going through with it."

"Okay." Harry said, although going to war with the Goblin Nation was not rejected out of hand by the teenager. "What is the difference between Valyrian Steel and a Vorpall Sword Luna?"

"Valyrian Steel is basically just enchanted high-purity iron, with a complex rune cluster carved into it. It's funny but Goblins cannot in fact forge it themselves, and yet they'll kill anyone they find who is doing so." The blonde informed "Anyway, the Steel is enchanted and carved, whereas Drawing a Vorpall Sword is wanded. The process I saw Gramma Alice go through actually transformed her wand into the hilt of an ethereal blade."

"And the creation is covered by the Interdict of Merlin." Albus shared with the group "I do not know how to make one, nor do I know anyone who does."

"Daddy might." Luna said "He's still alive right?"

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It was still a few days prior to the famous, and totally embarrassing, hug from Hermione. The three who Xenophilius Lovegood had consented to teaching, were once again in the Come and Go Room. Which appeared as a murky looking indoor forest scene for Harry's amusement.

His Holly wand had vanished completely in a swirl of billowing wind and magic, and in its place hanging on its own a foot in front of him, was a firm two handed purple grip. Sturdily attached to this grip was an enormous cross guard as wide as his hips, out of which had sprang a blade of equal thickness.

"Don't worry yourself Albus, it's not the size of the sword but how you use it that counts!" Harry commented cheekily, gesturing with the weapon at the Headmaster's Greatsword.

It's probably worth mentioning that Harry's Vorpall Sword was, -from absent pommel to single edged point- exactly as long as he was tall. The thing would have been unliftable, and ridiculously unwieldy had it been made from steel.

"That is the largest weapon I have ever seen!" Luna commented in amazement, and Harry gave a perverted little smile. "Oh shut up. You know what I mean."

"Conjure me a Baby Panda, I want to try it out." He commanded to the blonde.

Her father had told her that because Wu Jen had left her so out of practice with a wand, he would not teach her the magic, and that he might not have anyway because it was so dangerous. Luna had been a little disappointed, but was happy enough to see him alive again that she got over it swiftly.

Xeno having simply taken the news of time travel in stride, and informed her that she looked the splitting double of her mother Selene.

Swinging his mighty Vorpall Sword with an eerie "Swish" it connected with Tam's, before bisecting the Panda. She had a weapon that seemed halfway between serpentine blade and rapier, but stopping him from murdering Baby Panders was unforgivable!

"Bring it!" Harry challenged, locking eyes with the redhead.

What followed was a lot of childish horseplay, with Harry's impressive weapon dominating all-comers, and him loudly proclaiming his invincibility. It would have been over far sooner had

Luna, Sirius and Bellatrix not been firing off cheap shots intermittently, and sending animals at the two, imbued with malevolent sentience.

When they eventually wound down Albus commented "It is good to see you in such high spirits Harry."

"Well, life is good. Nobody is trying to kill me anymore than usual, and we have an honest shot at curing my mother's death. What's not to like?" Seeing the man looking uncertain he took a guess "Is this about the whole 'trying to get me killed' thing?"

"I had assumed it would change your perception of me, and am at a loss as to why that has not transpired." He admitted.

"Oh," said Harry "well killing Dark Lords is a bitch. Sending one kid off as a sacrificial goat is fair do's if it means the world does not have to enjoy Voldemort's company anymore. I mean, you had to kill your old friend to end World War Two didn't you? That must have sucked."

Albus didn't respond, but Luna did "It is a little known fact that Grindelwald is in actuality still alive."

"Is that true?" Harry asked uncomfortably.

"Oh yes," she went on "incarcerated in the prison he built during the forties to house his political and social opponents."

Horrible implications tumbled at lightning speed through the teenagers mind. He turned to the Headmaster and quite reasonably asked "So you are saying that the Dark Lord your chocolate frog card says was 'defeated,' and everyone believes this to be a euphemism for 'killed,' is still alive? That in the end you couldn't bring yourself to stop him because he was once a friend"

"Ending life is not something I take lightly Harry. A close companion of my youth least of all something I could easily stomach."

"No no, you misunderstand me." Harry interrupted. "I am saying that your initial plan to kill Voldemort involved me dying because my Horcrux connection tethered him to life. You are saying that somewhere there exists a building secure enough to house him, and

that I never even for an instant needed to die at all! He could have gone in the cell next to Grindelwald, and I could have died of old age?"

"Wha-" Albus said, suddenly at a loss for words.

"You hypocritic bastard!" Harry exploded, "That's it, I'm kicking your arse!" Looking around "Tam, you got my back? You're always going on about how brother wands working together can take any foe. Let's see how they stack up against the Elder wand."

"Harry, surely after what you hav-" The old man started nervously.

"Bella, we're playing with Dumbledore. Luna..." pissed off green eyes continued on ignoring him.

"Harry it is indisputable that you-"

"Sorry Albus old chum I'm sticking to The Code on this one. Rule Four; Never be afraid to have your side the first to resort to violence."

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Lens of Sanity

Dumbledore is always described as being a fast draw. Twitch response ritual? Sugar dependency? That's gotta be original!

Trials however, are something I've read dozens of times, most recently in 'Potter's Wheel' by esama. Hands up who knew Charles Dodgson was a mathematician. And Harry's sword looks suspiciously similar to that of another messy-haired leader of a ragtag band of misfits, eyebrow raise.

While we're on that, I have one thing to say about this Harry's friends; "what a crew!"

Chapter Eighteen: A Jabberwock in Seven Nineteen

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With messy blood matted hair and a severe limp, Albus Dumbledore eased his way into his brother's bar. Although the two had been estranged for much of the early part of their lives, they had eventually mended their relationship for the most part, and Albus just knew what was coming.

Carefully seating himself on the barstool he concluded that he had in fact suffered a fracture to his pelvis, and sighed knowing that none of his injuries would heal until Ms. Riddle released her curse. He had been fortunate enough when Severus come to his aid so swiftly, however that had brought about the quite hairy moment when the Potion Master's trademark Dark Slicing Curse had been reflected back at Albus by some form of altered duellist's shield.

After a short wait Abe came in from a back room, took a long look at his brother's ragged state of appearance, then promptly burst out in loud guffawing peals of laughter.

"If you are quite done, I would not mind a large volume of alcohol." The bearded man stated dismally. He was quite certain the phrase 'die the hero, or live long enough to become the villian' was going to crop up next time he was around a Dementor.

'At least I am still Master of the Elder Wand.'

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"Are you sure you picked up all of my fingers Bella?" Harry asked clumsily making his way down a flight of stairs on crutches. "No, don't put my leg on the windowsill, what if it falls out or something."

"I could just levitate you?" Sirius offered. He had quite the brutally blackened eye, but was by far the least injured.

"Hell no!" he spat "I'm getting to Poppy under my own power if it kills me."

Tam glared at him, and would undoubtedly have made some scathing comment, had her teeth not all been shattered. Although

she was happy to learn her brother wand theory actually had some merit, neither side had really won but neither had really lost either.

Walking, hopping, and hobbling around a corner in various states of injury, the battered little group came face to face with Hermione Granger. A woman who none of them had exchanged any words with at all for days, due to the fact that she was not talking to them over the whole cold bloodedly murdering people incidents.

"What the hell happened?" she screamed at them.

Swaying a little dizzily, Luna responded "We had a small disagreement with Dumbledore. It ended up with us working out some of our frustrations on him."

"Come on Hermione, give me a hand down to the Hospital." the one legged boy directed.

"What were you disagreeing with him about?" She asked taking him under the arm.

"Doesn't matter," Harry declared, sweeping an imperious glare over everyone "as far as I am concerned it's in the past. Understand?"

The group nodded at the order of silence, not telling Hermione things was important, and they all knew the score. Walking through the door to his favourite Wing of the Castle, Harry smiled a terrible blood splattered smile at the nurse.

Poppy didn't even bother to ask.

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A few days later everyone was Healed and back in fighting shape. It was decided that what had happened in the Room would stay in the Room, and nobody would ever mention it ever again, and they would all pretend that it had never happened.

They had clued in Hermione as to the location of Petunia Dursley, which of course just happened to be in the Necropolis. Which was the most secure building in the City of the Dead, and that meant that they would have to infiltrate the Dark Lord's main base. Unfortunately this necessitated fighting and killing the Jabberwock.

Hermione had not liked the plan, and once she had finally decided to help, had given Harry a hug. He'd nearly said, y'know ...things. That's how touched he'd been!

Now they were sitting about in the main room of Caerbannog working through their monster slaying strategy. The Headmaster had already turned down Harry's anonymous appeal to the Board of Governors for improved Zeppelin access to the School, stating the glaring lack of other students bringing their own Zeppelins with them when they embarked on their education, as worrisome in the extreme.

But the Headmaster and the Board had publicly informed the 'anonymous' Zeppelin advocate, that only one student in the School currently owned a Zeppelin. To which Harry had replied that, the fact was only due to the horrendously bad Zeppelin access the Castle currently employed.

He'd still been turned down though.

The Wizengamot had done the same thing on his first, and hopefully last, meeting. Seriously, he'd been forced to sit through three hours of Broomstick legislation recommendations, and was in no hurry to ever do that again.

"So what do we know about Jabberwocks, other than that Vorpal Swords work well against them?" Harry asked.

"Yes," Tam agreed "there are bound to be some glaring weaknesses we can exploit."

"What makes you think that?" Sirius asked.

"Well it's a Dark Creature," she said like it was the most obvious thing in the world "when you breed, say a Basilisk, you are creating an intelligent, magically resistant serpent, with nigh unhealable venom, which can kill with its stare. On the down side, the day's first crowing of a rooster will kill it dead to the ground. All Dark Creatures have weaknesses like that, it is a kind of balance."

"She's correct of course." Luna agreed "However that doesn't help us very much."

"It doesn't?" The redhead asked in confusion.

"No, because Jabberwocks are not actually Dark Creatures at all." The blonde informed tiredly "They are Guardians spawned by a magical forest. They act as a protector, which technically means they are Light Creatures. Our problem is that Voldemort has ensured what the Jabberwock is protecting the Holy Forest from, is people intending to go against the Dark Lord's will."

"So," began Hermione "you're saying that if a person is working with Voldemort, then they have nothing to fear passing through the Holy Forest at all. Why is it called the Holy Forest by the way?"

Luna laughed "Because the City of the Dead is/was a place of pilgrimage, and you have to carry a Dark Mark to even get inside. There is a good reason why the only person I know who has even set foot in the City is Se-, Snape."

Sirius was about to make a comment, not quite asking, whether or not she knew what happened to Remus Lupin, but Harry interrupted "Back to glaring weaknesses everybody!"

"They do not have any, save the inability to leave their Forest." Albus informed "Even should we slay the beast, it will be respawned by the Forest's magic eventually."

"What if we shoot it in the face from long distance using ninety millimetres of Valyrian Steel?" Harry asked.

"They don't have brains." Luna said "They do have a nerve cluster which means removing the head will kill it, but as they don't have brains, shooting it in the face is something which it would heal from."

"Great. More good news!" He stated despondently. "Just tell me everything you know, I'll think of something."

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This was by a wide margin, the worst plan Harry had ever come up with. Such a staggeringly huge number of things could go wrong, and if any one thing went wrong, they would all get eaten by the Jabberwock.

Of course he was going through with it anyway.

For the most part Harry was into plans which were a variant of; '...and then we kill whatever is in our way in a laughably straightforward manner.' However their simply weren't any laughably straightforward methods to kill the monster, that had been repeatedly and successfully pounded into his head over the last few days.

Here's one fun fact, they are all but immune to direct magic. Luna's little right cross seen in the Pensive was the most powerful spell she knows, it required a Double Seal one of which was a five point elemental, constructed using all five fingers on one hand simultaneously, and it necessitated direct physical contact to cast.

It did no damage bar a slight dazing, and was used to physically move the Jabberwock into position for the ninety seconds of forest binding she'd manage to set up.

Harry had been more sanguine with regards to the dreadful plan back when he thought he was invincible. Unfortunately Luna had informed him that she could only resurrect him should his forehead survive. That if his head were to explode, and perhaps even if he were hit with a Killing Curse, then he would be just as dead as anybody else. So he could take a let them eat cake, guillotine special, and still be revived, but was not unkillable.

Should the Jabberwock win, it was doubtful that enough would be left to resurrect. Hence the lowered level of belligerent overconfidence.

Hearing a kind of 'galumphing' noise in the distance, Harry knew it was almost time. Another fun fact about Jabberwocks, they had one bitchingly effective first line of defence; a kind of muttered, burbling sound which they were constantly releasing. A sound which was piercing in a way which could penetrate silencing spells and earplugs, and caused a sort of confounding, wide spectrum confusion ward. The upshot rendered targeting difficult, and could even go so far as to make the person affected by it, attack friends and allies.

Harry twitched his nose intimidatingly and laid back his menacing floppy ears. He went with that red eye gazing thing he'd learned from Voldemort.

Here's one fun fact about Luna Lovegood; apparently she can play the guitar.

At her opening note Harry took off like the hounds of hell were fleeing from him.

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"Okay, so that takes care of the seventh problem," Harry said wearily five days previously "what's next on the never ending problems list?"

"Burling." Came Albus' response. They'd been at this all day and had decided to break out the alcohol to make the process more bearable. Holding the stem of a tall wineglass and sipping a 1956 Mouton Rothschild, Harry concluded that Fleur really did have good taste. He would have to tell her that at some point. "That is the effect which-"

"I remember what it does," He said tiredly "a multi-octave soul rending ward."

"Perhaps we could record some white noise and blanket the area when the creature attacks." The old man said finishing off his glass.

Luna seemed to be frowning, but she didn't comment, so the leader of this ridiculous -and blatantly impossible- quest continued "Is the monster not supposed to alter the Burble's speed and frequency in an intelligent way though, it can anticipate nonliving sounds using a narrowband form of Precognition right? Thus preventing something recorded previously from being successful."

"Unfortunately you are correct Harry." Dumbledore admitted, pouring himself yet another glass. They were going to have to stop soon, because more than just Harry's world was swimming in an alcohol induced haze.

Eyes crossed and bleary expression on her face, Luna asked "How fast would the amplitude changes be needed? Like if we were

thinking of this as if it were a piece of music, and we were assuming the varied sounds as being notes?"

Sharing an uncertain look with the Headmaster, the two looked over at the clearly inebriated blonde. Albus scribbled a few hasty calculations before replying "If this were a piece of music, it would require in excess of fourteen notes per second..."

He continued but Luna stood and declared "Fetch me a guitar!" on unsteady legs.

"...only I do not know of any composition which would meet the requirements." Albus finished.

From her faceplanted position on the floor, Luna stated "You have seven minutes nineteen seconds to defeat the Jabberwock, and I'm going to need to record a backing track" before curling up where she lay and falling drunkenly asleep.

Harry conjured a blanket and carefully wrapped it around his friend. "So what's the ninth problem?" He asked after a time.

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'Through the Fire and Flames' had at some point in the -probably far distant- future, been written by two guys named Herman Li and Sam Totman.

It had many notes.

Many.

No really, it had MANY notes. And Luna seemed to be able to hit every. single. one. of. them.

Seriously.

Harry was bounding toward his opponent at an incredible speed, but he had to admit that what he was listening too had to be impossible. Luna was Time-Turned, and had a similarly Time-Turned yellow ostrich-racehorse creature acting as her steed. As it happened a Jabberwock found noises which drowned out their Burbling defence quite disagreeable, and so the two blondes' and their Ibanez S670's

were quite objectionable to the creature. Hence the fast footed "Chocobo," or whatever she was calling it, acting as her legs.

On lead guitar Past Luna was accompanying Present Luna, -who was also on lead guitar apparently- for the promised seven minutes nineteen seconds she said they had to defeat the Jabberwock.

Hundreds of flying magical Amplifiers had been Animated and imbued with Protean behaviour, which would keep them close enough to the battle zone, and go a ways in preventing them from being destroyed by the enraged behemoth. Fire-Friend rune sets were a given, and all the people present on this fool's errand had similarly been made to drink a Master's Brew of the Fire-Friend Potion.

It should help a little defending against those damned eyes of flame.

Harry managed a vaulting dodge off a one year old -yet somehow ancient- oak tree, as he saw a flash and imagined a distant crack float across the clearing. It was one of those awesome 'camera follows the bullet' moments, as Tam unloaded a Valyrian round from her Lee-Enfield bolt-action, magazine-fed, repeating rifle. A weapon she surprisingly already knew how to operate thanks to a naturally curious temperament, and a squaddy she remembered talking to back in the Second World War.

The .303 rune enhanced bullet span from the barrel, leapt across the gulf between the redhead and the Jabberwock, and lanced straight through the reptile's flaring right eye. As the creature dropped to the ground, Sirius revved his motorbike and the two shot off through the air and tried to get into a better position.

Having used the distraction to get close, Harry did a rapid transformation, took Vorpall Sword in hand, and with an almighty 'Swish' scored a single deep slash down the Jabberwock's flank.

Bounding away on powerful white legs Harry managed a brief thought:

'Well that was once.'

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"What do you mean you are going to fight it in your Animagus form?" Luna and Hermione screamed with identically outraged expressions. It was the day following Luna's declaration of having the Burbling problem dealt with.

Noting that those particular two were agreeing something was impossible brought a smile to Harry's face. "Vorpall Bunny remember?"

"YOU'RE JUST A NORMAL RABBIT!" Luna shouted at his ridiculousness "It's only you that adds the word Vorpall to it."

"We should do another Polyjuice tour of Hogwarts, you're acting all stressed and crazy." Harry commented. "I know you almost died last time, but we'll be careful."

"I'm acting crazy?" She asked incredulously.

"Yes," he confirmed infuriatingly "you didn't even stop to think why it might be a good idea. And that is plainly not like you." After a speculative frown he finished "Seriously though, Polyjuice tour? It might help."

Instead of continuing to shout, Luna and Hermione went off and had a muted discussion while Harry went back to stroking Bella behind her feline ears. He should probably ask why she still spent so much of her time in animal form, but if it made her happy then why not.

"Protean behaviour?" Hermione questioningly concluded, while thinking 'damn Harry and his stupid ideas!' That was another thing she agreed with Luna on; did Harry have a plan which made a twisted kind of sense, or was he making it all up at random and getting lucky?

"Correct." The raven haired man confirmed "The ability to leap, jump, outrun, and change direction. And do so at random, without a moment's notice or hesitation. My Animagus form rocks!"

"If you get hit even once you'll die." Luna flatly stated.

"I'm not going to come close to getting hit though am I?" He challenged "I'm Vorpall unlike you lesser mammals."

At that Luna decided to kidnap Fleur Delacour. With her around maybe Luna would have enough free time to get her head back in the game. She didn't like being the second most chaotic person in the room.

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Harry was getting into it, it was fine. Okay, he had maybe been backhanded into a tree and had lost consciousness briefly, but Dumbledore had used that to lop off one of the damn thing's claws with his massive Claymore. And okay, maybe doing that had knocked one of the Luna's from her Chocobo's back for a time, however in her defence she still hadn't missed a note.

And well, the loss of one of its limbs hadn't really been a setback for their opponent, as a replacement claw had instantly sprang from the stump in a gooey mass of white ... something ... which seemed to have crafted a new arm from nowhere. They hadn't known it could do that, and Harry was naming the process hyper-healing for the time being.

Transform, 'Swish', blood splatter, flee.

That was his world. At least the wounds inflicted by Vorpall Sword and Valyrian Rounds seemed to be difficult to heal. Crafting a new limb had dazed the thing for a moment, shame Harry had been down at the time and couldn't capitalise on that.

Transform, 'Swish', blood splatter, flee.

Where the bloody hell were those reinforcements from Gaul?

As if the thought had summoned her, the perfect goddess that was Fleur Delacour came padding in on the back of a gigantic Cerberus, man but that woman was hot! Barrelling into a sideways roll to barely avoid the insanely sharp, insanely fast moving talons, Harry would have been skewered in an instant more. Had it not been for the regular unheard clattering sounds, which were emanating from the platinum woman coming to his rescue.

Have you ever heard of a M2 Browning .50 Calibre Machine Gun?

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you mounted one on the back of an enraged three headed dog, armed it with Valyrian Rounds, and then put a pissed off Veela behind it?

There was a reason Harry liked the woman after all.

And surprisingly enough it wasn't because of her more obvious charms.

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"You cried at my funeral!" Harry taunted.

"Merlin I hate you so much!" Fleur declared.

"You cried, I've seen the Pensieve memory." He said in a sing-songy voice "You like me, nar, nar. Don't bother denying it. We all know now!"

"The only reason I am here at all is because your idiotic blonde friend kidnapped my sister Gabrielle, and sent a ransom note saying she would not be returned until either I come to Hogwarts, or my father puts a hundred thousand galleons into a suitcase and meets her at Charles de Gaulle Airport." Fleur protested.

Thinking it over for a while Harry responded "So you're implying that your sister's life is not worth a hundred thousand galleons then?"

"Gah!" the platinum blonde exploded.

"Seriously, I could use the money." Luna informed.

"Coming to England to compete in 'ze Tournament was the single worst decision I 'ave ever made." The French woman voiced her dismay. "What do you want? I am certain it is not 'ze ransom, so out with it."

"We're fighting a Jabberwock and are probably all going to die horribly in the attempt." Luna clued her in "I was wondering if you wanted to help."

"We've had as many runescribes as we could find set up the base iron, but because it's so illegal to forge Valyrian Steel, we have to do

the last four stages ourselves. As well as craft the stuff into bullets." Harry said, already onto the next thing. "It's taking ages, and we could use an extra pair of hands."

Wondering whether it was worth attempting to go back to the whole 'kidnapped sister' thing, Fleur asked "How illegal?"

"War with the Goblin Nation illegal."

She closed her big blue eyes for a long time in prayer, before getting down and helping.

"Oh, and Fleur..." Harry went on as an afterthought. Seeing her look at him he finished "...thanks for the whole crying thing. It meant a lot."

Her damn traitorous lips cracked a small pleased smile before she could stop them.

'Merde!'

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Say what you will about the woman, she was of the type that would voluntarily face a Dragon, and not even really blink at being asked to help take down an invincible monster. Round after Round of unheard clattering impacted the Jabberwock, opening up vicious wounds on its flank. Fleur had been kept in reserve, but Harry concluded that not getting skewered was probably a good enough reason to play 'big damn hero' at his expense.

'Withdraw woman, withdraw!' He mentally commanded, the damn thing was charging a big old ball of flame just for her, while she wound down her first belt rather than stop firing. 'Screw this.'

Harry ran barely outside her field of fire and met with the behemoth, hopping as swiftly as his form could move he tried for a coup de grâce by heading up its back. The ball of flame was unleashed but Fleur was a big girl and could take care of herself, so he'd assume she was fine.

He got a nice deep gash, but the head was still on. 'Whoa! Watch those teeth there Harry. That was close.'

He got clear yet again by virtue of a truly outstanding piece of transfiguration from the Headmaster. A bloody Direwolf, a thousand pounds and ten feet at the shoulder. That was impressive.

Oh it's dead.

Well it was still impressive, and it gave Harry the moment he needed to escape.

As he heard Luna start on her sixth solo, Harry was beginning to wonder if this was a good idea, whoever came up with this plan had to be mental.

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She had that little frown of concentration she always got when working through the meaning of a particularly complex theory. Tam noted this a few days before, from her reclined position just out of the woman's line of sight. Hermione was pouring over one of those massive tomes she was forever reading, and unintentionally distracting the redhead as she was forever doing.

Giving up as a bad job, the seemingly never ending task of transmuting all of this iron into Valyrian Steel, Tam got up and crossed to the far side of the Room of Requirement. "You are looking a little worn out Hermione, what are you reading?"

She startled a little at the interruption, and a fleck of that wild chestnut hair of hers fell across her brow. "I have discovered a reference to the super fast method of motion which was described to me, and I think I may be on the way to figuring out how to counter it." Hermione shared, brushing aside that lock of hair with an understated elegance which was a constant of the woman.

Resisting the urge to run her fingers through the brunette's hair Tam sat "Do tell. I agree with you that whiffling is not the real word, so must be a reference for something else. You know the word is actually a method of dive used by ornithologists?"

"Is it really?" Hermione asked in a charmingly wondering tone "Fascinating. Regardless, I believe that what was being described is a Line of Sight Apparition variant, utilised primarily by Japanese

spell casters. Or some Magical Creature deviation of the ability at any rate."

Arching her back the woman let out a long yawn, and flexed her limbs. If Tam didn't know better she'd swear the woman was doing it on purpose, those simple clothes she wore tightening at the overextension. "Worn out like I say." Tam smiled winningly "Would you like a massage? Loosening the muscles will help you concentrate better later on."

"I really should keep on at this, it is important-" Hermione began, tempted but instinctively twitching to return to her books.

'Time to Griffindork this thing out' Tam thought, physically taking hold of the woman's shoulders, gently commanding "Lie down! It has been a long time since I have done this, but I assure you I am quite skilled."

Books put aside and a transfigured table top later, found her strong delicate fingers working their way up and down Hermione's back. Finding tension and working it loose, the occasional grunts not really helping Tam's concentration, and Harry's wandering into the Room and smirking as he left not really helping either.

Okay, so Tam may have been forcing a little magic through her palms and fingertips which was making them glow a faint blue light, but it did enhance the experience so that was what mattered. When she was most of the way through, Hermione let out a long low moan and said "You are a really great friend Tam."

"It's my pleasure." The redhead replied with an indecipherable tone.

Not long after that she went in search of a shower. A cold one. Like glacial cold.

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'It's the "Thu-Dum" noise/feeling, that's what Hermione was trying to explain.' Harry realised, rapidly returning to human form, and spinning his unwieldy blade like it were an aluminium rapier. He aimed for clear air, which was filled a moment later by their gigantic foe. Attempting to vanish and reappear directly behind him, bastard, as if that would work against him!

Erm-, again.

He scored another hit. Arm lopping off, nice. And even better, the thing didn't re-grow!

He was making progress.

Harry had thought they were all doomed when Hermione had almost gotten tagged, but Tam's leaping from the motorbike directly overhead, scoring a long slash with her serpentine blade, had been exactly as awesomely dangerous as if to be something Harry had done himself.

He came around for another pass, light on his paws.

'Come on Harry, you're a Bunny Rabbit, top of the fucking food chain! You can take such a pathetic little reptile with ease.'

A wandless mouse to hippogriff transfiguration dove into yet another annoyingly well targeted fireball, and it absorbed most of the force, with the Fire-Friend Potion taking care of the uncomfortable wash of heat.

Fleur was on her last belt of ammo, Dumbledore was still around here somewhere but hadn't been seen for a while, and Luna was well into what had to be her climactic solo. Meaning it was down to one of the Vorpall Bunnies in this forest to kill the Japperwock, and one of them better do it soon!

Heading directly through the scorched hippogriff mist, Harry let his instincts be his guide. Left, left again, right. Bound behind that boulder, sidestep the horrendously fast talon impact, brute force a solid shield. It was another silverback gorilla, scamper through some scorched gorilla mist. Transform. Bring Sword of Vorpall to the fore.

Harry and the Jabberwock locked eyes. It was time to see beyond doubt, just who was top of the food chain.

Snickersnack!

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"Right on the last note!" Harry shouted "How fucking badass was THAT!"

Sirius flew over on his bike with Albus in tow, Fleur padded her way toward the headless beast, and Hermione was watching Tam as she set about chopping relentlessly, looking to pull out the things heart against the off chance it would somehow recover.

"You guys owe me a shiny fiddle made of gold!" Future Luna commented as Past Luna vanished across the sands of time.

"Yeah yeah, fine. Nice tone by the way." Harry complimented.

"Honestly, magicing those extra two frets was the hardest part." She replied negligently.

"ARE YOU TWO COMPLETEY INSANE!" Fleur yelled "We 'av almost died so many times today."

"True, but we didn't." Harry pointed out reasonably. "What annoys me is that we now have to use Essence of Snape to get through the final ward."

As they took off deeper into the forest, Hermione's hand squeezed the French woman's shoulder consolingly "You'll get used to it Fleur."

Harry's voice called from the distance "Onward!"

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Lens of Sanity

Clearly I've used Alice Lovegood and Jabberwock description from Lionheart. Credit where it's due. I re-read the section in ChapEightyFour, then asked my brain how Harry's crew would tackle one. (Seriously, that was my brain's Burbling solution!)

The M2 Browning can be mounted on anything (including Cerberus'), there's a reason it's been in use since 1921.

BTW, Luna was playing my guitar, whoo self insertion!

Lastly; 'Through the Fire and Flames' was released August 2006, so either Luna is lying about her age, or was present during the 2005 recording, possibly both? I wouldn't put it past her!

Chapter Nineteen: The City of the Dead

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A tired group approached the final ward, the one preventing any who did not hold Voldemort's Dark Mark from crossing, and the last defence before entering the City outskirts. "Let's backtrack half a mile and set up camp." Harry declared "It'll be best to do this after a bit of rest anyway."

Surprisingly an over one hundred decibel rendition of shred metal, numerous assumedly large explosions, and the conclave of magical energy undoubtedly released during the battle, did not negate the fact that this was a stealthy, infiltration mission.

No doubt there were Magicals sensitive enough, and near enough to have felt something had happened, however Albus' first job once Harry had joined battle with the creature, had been to set up beefy silencing wardlines with Hermione. Not keep noise out, but to prevent it from escaping.

Nevertheless it was really only a matter of time until the Death Eater's, or whoever they did send, from pinning down the location. Luckily not long after the Jabberwock died, it sort of melted down, becoming part of the ground. If you knew what you were looking at, you would be able to recognise the small hillock as the corpse of a monster, but simply passing over the site would probably not be enough for identification.

For the time being their enemies should simply assume that whatever had happened had been unsuccessful, and that the Jabberwock was still alive wandering around somewhere.

So now the seven were setting up a small encampment, beneath powerfully cast temporary wards, obfuscation, and anti-scriving. "I accidentally brought only four sleeping bags so some of us are going to have to share." Harry commented in a surprised voice "I say let the old man, and the filthy dog keep their own. Sadly that means you're with Hermione, Tam."

Turning to Fleur with an innocent expression on his face, he saw her glaring at him for some reason. The French woman lifted her wand to the side, and simply conjured a spare sleeping bag. Lifting an

eyebrow pointedly at him, Harry tried to play it off as not having thought of that. Which was ridiculous in the extreme saying as Padfoot was in the process of setting up the Beer Tent.

Truly, honest to the gods, and by the names of Meave, Merlin, and Morgana, magic made Camping a totally different experience. The vast majority of Muggles Camping did not have access to a Beer Tent, as far as Harry understood things, having never in fact experienced it himself.

It did not take very long at all before everyone was nice and relaxed around the enormous bonfire, listening to a mellow but singularly complex piece of music let loose from Luna's fingertips. All counterpointed melodies and abstract scale selection. Listening made Harry wish he knew more about music in general, for no other reason than to appreciate what he was listening to, but could not really hear.

Taking a reinforced bag from one of the supply boxes, Harry removed a small selection of simple bread products. They had been purchased from a particular bakery in the castle-town of Carcassonne, southern France a few days before, and kept fresh using a 'Keeping'. Negligently tossing them to his platinum companion Harry went back over by Sirius, and to under appreciating the music.

He didn't bother to look back for her reaction.

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Her Aunt Bellatrix was nothing if not a terrible actress in Tonks' opinion. Given that she was an astute observer of human mannerisms, due to the desire to get the most from her innate skills as a metamorphmagus, this might not be saying much. Yet when she thought her Aunt was terrible actress, Tonks was still quite confident that it wasn't her practiced eye alone which was making her think that.

She'd never seen Professor Dumbledore carry himself with that kind of predatory laze. A slouching menace which screamed to pray, that the relaxed nature of its carriage was brought from certain knowledge, nothing could possibly be in the vicinity which could harm it.

Don't get her wrong, Headmaster Dumbledore could command an air of danger when in the heat of battle, but it was nothing at all like watching her Aunt wearing his form. That was it! It was as though he wanted to be attacked, was begging for it, so that he could display his superiority to anyone foolish enough to challenge him.

Or in this case her, because it was really Bellatrix Black under Polyjuice, and not Albus Dumbledore.

Aunt Bellatrix was a terrible actress.

Tonks would have been infinitely more believable had she been allowed to play his part.

Tonks sighed audibly. Unfortunately, as skilled with a wand as she was, Tonks was only a year out of the Auror Academy. Anyone attacking 'Albus Dumbledore' would doubtlessly go all out from the first spell, or try to catch him unawares. In that circumstance, Tonks would have to admit she'd die very quickly, whereas the woman who her mother had told such terrifying tales about, would not.

She was walking down the street with Bellatrix frickin' LeStrange!

That fact still shocked her when it shot through her mind. This was the woman she used to have nightmares about, the monster under the bed, who would come out and gobble up little girls who were bad and didn't eat their vegetables. It was all the kid's doing of course. The Boy-Who-Lived, what an arrogant prick he'd turned out to be, once she got the dubious 'honour' of meeting him.

He'd flatly refused to call her anything but her loathed first name when they'd met. In fact it was worse than that. It was more like he was affronted someone like her would have the audacity to demand such consideration, as if a small child had insisted he call them 'Sir' rather than their name.

Things had come to a head when she'd overheard that comment about her being a one-woman Polyjuice Brothel, and someone's sternum may have needed to be Vanished and re-grown. But the upshot was that the Boy-Who-Lived had eventually started treating her like a real person. Well Harry had at any rate, he seemed to hate Boy-Who-Lived more than the Death Eaters did.

He was alright actually. He'd gotten her a massive pay-grade increase totally out of nowhere. Tonks would never have seen that one coming in a million years, the kid barely even knew her, and yet when he forced the Ministry to give in to his demands, she was one of the few he'd thought to get something for. And yeah, her new apartment; it rocked!

Pure and simple.

Passing a small group on Hogsmeade's main street Tonks came to a sudden realisation; in Harry's world you were either a real person, and he could torture you right up to your breaking point before he did something annoyingly thoughtful and endearing. Or you were not a real person, and didn't really count as having thoughts or feelings of your own.

Tonks eyes widened.

She was on the inside!

Bloody hell; Harry talked to Albus Dumbledore like an equal, to Minister Scrimgeour like he was a stray dog, and the Dark Lord as if he were nothing more than a minor irritation. That realisation was important, it had to be. Frickin' hell, rumour had it that Harry'd cut off Scrimgeour's hand, then ransomed it back to him!

Seeing the poorly hidden group spring their quote, unquote 'Ambush'; Tonks let fly her opening volley of Jinxes.

When exactly had her life turned this strange?

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'Fleur can be so much fun' Harry thought with a slight smile as he was getting ready to set off.

They had talked a little, but nothing had really happened. There had been this one moment where he'd leaned in as if to kiss her, she'd frozen in vacillation and looked like a deer in headlights. Only, instead of doing so he'd softly whispered "Goodnight" right next to her ear while inhaling her scent, then disengaged back to his tent.

Harry had noticed her glowing softly out the corner of his eye. She'd probably spent the six hours of resting time beating herself up about that. Fleur could be so much fun, and knowing what a glowing Veela was feeling, made understanding her situation all the more amusing.

It was a little after four in the morning, and Harry rounded on Luna cheerfully "What happened to her?"

"Oh for heaven's sake Harry, I am not a hack Seer you know. My purpose is not to read your tealeaves and tell you your future." She complained in annoyance. "That future does not, and will never exist, in any form. So what on earth could it possibly matter?"

"Come on." The raven haired boy chided as the two loose groups headed for the final ward "I'm curious. I bet she went down taking out a hundred Death Eater's in a blaze of awesomest glory or something. A big finish like in a story!"

"You'd lose that bet." Luna muttered. Noting that Harry probably wasn't going to let this drop she sighed. "We believed she had been killed when the French Ministry capitulated to Voldemot, but she hadn't. Fleur reappeared a year and a half later married to the Earl of the North, which was the title given to the de facto ruler of the Northern Prefecture."

Harry frowned but waved her to go on.

"The United Kingdom, France, Germany and so on, were all reorganised into the Northern territory. And that was the one with the greatest prestige, due to it being the place in which the City of the Dead is located, and the Dark Lord spends most of his time. What I am saying is that your darling Fleur Delacour was married to one of the most powerful men in the world."

"Who?" Harry asked with a sinking feeling that he wasn't going to like this.

"Oh have a friggin' guess why don't you?" Luna demanded in annoyance. Seeing her friend just looking back at her dumbly, the two approached the boundary and drank their Essence of Snape potion, so she finished. "Who do you think Countess Malfoy was married to you idiot!"

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Hitting a masked Death Eater with a 'Cut & Crush' Auror special, Tonks managed to spin back and get a full view of Dumbledore/Bellatrix taking down four enemies at once. It was the 22nd of August, and information about the Dark Lord's movements had indicated he would be well out of the country, attempting to make inroads with a Death Eater named Karkaroff from the old days. The man seemed to have a foothold at Durmstrang, and was bartering it in exchange for not getting horribly murdered for tossing a bunch of his associates to the wolves.

The world knew Harry was alive again thanks to his showing up at the Summer Wizengamot meeting and acting surprised when people claimed they'd been to his funeral. However this appeared not to have altered Voldemort's plans for Europe, so they were using this morning as a distraction.

With Dumbledore accompanying Harry on whatever secret mission they were undertaking, the decision had been made to leak this early morning trip to the Death Eaters, so that their numbers would be lessened wherever the other mission was taking place.

Tonks was betting on it being the City of the Dead, just like pretty much anybody with a brain, but she could be wrong. Malfoy Manner was a big target after all, even if there was still no evidence the Malfoy's had joined the Dark Lord.

The downside of the plan was that it was being leaked through Snape, and the man's cover might be blown if the Dark Lord concluded it was a misdirection the Potions Master should have seen through. And risking Snape's position amongst the Death Eaters meant whatever the distraction was for, had to be important.

Incanting a Hit-Wizard grade lightning hex nicknamed 'The Shocker,' Tonks attempted to fight the grin which always tried to make itself known whenever she used that spell. Tonks loved the Shocker after all. It took off the silver mask being worn by one of the new recruits, and Tonks noticed with surprise that she knew the young woman. She'd been a Ravenclaw in the year above her, and had definitely joined up with those 'emilie' people.

The implication of course being that 'the Lockheart Legion' was nothing but a recruitment organisation for the Death Eaters, as the Order had suspected.

Pushing the realisation aside the metamorphmagus took in that Aunt Bellatrix Polyjuice potion was wearing off, and she was trading shots with a mountain of a man holding a broadsword in his offhand. She linked up with Mad-Eye and three other members of Team Tiger, then set about dealing with the weaker members and stragglers.

A reversed ambush truly did put the initiative on those being attacked, given that so few members of the Order had been taken out of the fight. Bill Weasley had taken a Dark Stunner and would be out for a while, but the man would be fine. The rest were finishing up the prisoner binding process, and Tonks moved back over to the single battle which was still going strong.

Bellatrix was taunting what could only be one of those Founder guys, using a baby voice of all things. Damn it was creepy hearing her talk about how she was going to eat the man's children when using that tone. She seemed to perhaps be a little outmatched by the man, however once he noticed reinforcements were on their way and that strong Escape Wards were in place, he shot out a series of bright flashes and thick smoke.

Then presumably ran off, grabbed a broom, or turned invisible.

Either way, the battle had been an outstanding success.

Good luck Team Bunny Rabbit, it was up to you guys now! ... On reflection the Order really needed to institute a rule preventing Harry from naming things.

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The Necropolis was Voldemort's main seat of power. An imposing tower of forty nine levels, with increasing security designations every seven levels, and a final seven each being defended as closely as the all the other levels combined. According to Luna, nobody had ever successfully gotten as far as their group had this morning, so no hostile force had ever attempted to infiltrate the fortress.

And it got worse.

Only the top, arguably least defended, floor was above ground. It was like an anti-tower, and upon seeing it Luna had instantly concluded that Helga had come up with that idea. Who in the hell built an underground tower fortress? This was not a good sign. Petunia Dursley would be in the most defended cell, on the most defended floor.

The vessel of Lily Potter's sacrifice would seem too valuable to the Dark Lord to be hidden anywhere else. As it was that he did not know that the Blood Protection Guardian which had offed Quirinus Quirrell in 1992, had died three years prior while Harry was kicking back in Azkaban.

"Wait!" Harry mutely shouted, from his position inside the decadently constructed alleyway "We're acting like idiots!"

"What do you mean?" Hermione asked, allowing her Disillusionment Charm dissolve. The others, especially Albus looked intrigued at his statement.

"Come on!" Harry spat "We have to infiltrate a high tower, battle our way through the best of Voldemort's security. Search the entire fortress until we find the deepest, most secure cell. Extricate the prisoner, and then escape the alerted City somehow."

"Well yeah." Luna commented, like this was no big deal. "We already knew this was impossible remember?"

Everyone pretty much nodded at this. "But you told me that Helga probably designed it, and she always does the sensible thing." Luna waved for him to continue "Which means that the 'prisoner' we would eventually rescue, wouldn't really be Aunt Petunia at all. It would be a Simulacrum which looks like her!"

Luna blinked, and everyone else shifted uncomfortably.

"Bloody hell, you're right." Sirius voiced it "So where the hell is Petunia then?"

They forlornly shuffled for a while, each lost in thought. Albus and Hermione seemed to come to the same conclusion at the exactly the

same time. "She's still in this City somewhere, but housed in a Fidelius protected building."

Flopping to the ground, back supported against the marble wall, Harry closed his eyes and began rubbing his temples. "How long before Tonks, Bella, and the rest of Tiger Team walk into the ambush?"

Hermione cast a 'Tempus' and informed him it was around an hour away, right as Tam returned from her little jaunt about town.

"There is an ice-cream parlour in this City..." Tam voiced, shaking her head in amazement. "We may be an evil organisation, but we won't say no to a tutti frutti with sprinkles!" she intoned majestically, and Hermione almost ruptured something preventing herself from laughing aloud.

"Stop with 'ze jokes!" Fleur commanded in horror "If 'zis mission is impossible, 'zen we should withdraw while we can."

"You can't give up just because something is impossible Fleur." Harry admonished "In fact, if it wasn't impossible, I don't think I'd be interested in doing it at all!"

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"Okay, so we have an hour to crack the Fidelius." Harry concluded "What do we know about that Charm?"

"It conceals a Secret inside a Secret Keepers very Soul." Luna replied, not in the least bit phased by the declaration that Harry was going to pull this off somehow. "And the Secret cannot be obtained forcibly in any way, even Legilimency and the Imperius Curse will fail. The Secret must be willingly shared."

"Fine, and we don't know who the Secret Keeper is, what else?" The raven haired man went on.

"If one does not know the Secret, they could be staring directly at the hidden location and not be capable of discovering it." Dumbledore said.

"When the Secret Keeper dies, all those who knew the Secret become Secret Keepers themselves." Hermione added, at Harry's gesture to continue.

"People who do not know the Secret, can still know that something is hidden, be aware of the name of the place and even talk about it. However they will still not be able to find it." Tam said, having researched this particular Charm quite thoroughly. A few strange looks had her expound on the claim "Advanced methods of Scrying, or something like setting off a Taboo will allow one to narrow down the location of a covered building, only they still will not be capable of finding it."

"Can 'ze Secret Keeper be Obliviated of the knowledge?" Fleur asked, getting into it. 'What? Smart chicks are hot!' Harry thought, for a moment distracted "It sounds like Soul magic to me, so I would doubt it."

"No they cannot be." Dumbledore confirmed.

"What happens if someone is physically brought through the Charm's protection, without knowing the Secret?" Harry asked.

"Ghosting." Tam said "That is called Ghosting. Once the person leaves they forget where they had been, if not what they had done once inside."

"Why don't we do that?" Sirius asked, having had the wherewithal to erect some Privacy Charms during the increasingly loud conversation.

Harry liked it "Yeah, we would get stung by the other wardings around the building, but who the hell cares. Wands-a-Blazin' sounds good to me at this point."

"What are you saying Harry?" his very bushy haired friend asked. "We go around grabbing Death Eaters and hope one of them happens to be going where we want them to be going?"

"We pair off," Harry decided "Slap an Imperius on the highest ranking Death Eater you can find, and command them to go through the nearest Fidelius protected building, he or she knows."

"I can't do an Imperius Curse Harry." She protested.

"Yeah, I hate to use it for anything outside of sex, but what are you gonna do?" He admitted "This is gonna be fast and nasty."

The group took a few moments to think through the plan. They would have about forty minutes before Tiger Team created the distraction to capture a useful Death Eater, then maybe half an hour to search whatever location they find. Then it would be recover the prisoner, and run like hell.

He thought over the safest teams, and who was capable of the Imperius. Harry hated that Curse, it was the only Unforgivable which he thought was actually dangerous. Stealing someone's will, the idea sickened him. It was one thing to play with it with someone like Tracy, who was so unbelievably submissive, and got really turned on by the whole thing. But using it in this way, even on a known enemy it was appalling, and probably went a ways in explaining why he was so bad at casting it.

Harry made his decision. Fleur, Luna, Sirius would be the trio. He'd pair Hermione with Dumbledore because she needed the most protection, that left him and his 'brother,' good times.

"Okay, let's rock and roll." They all vanished from sight, and scattered to the winds of fair fortune.

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Erection pressed up against his companion's firm well sculpted ass, the two were concealed beneath Harry's Invisibility Cloak, scoping out likely targets. "For Merlin's sake Harry, there is seriously something very wrong with you!"

"It's hardly my fault, I have a thing for redheads, and you smell really, really good." He protested.

She let out a muted grunt of annoyance. "You know I'm a guy right? Surely that means something to you."

"Well yeah," he agreed "it does in a logical way, but come on. You've got the body of a fucking pornstar, what do you expect?"

"Gah! You have Luna Polyjuice into me sometimes, don't you!" Harry didn't bother to deny it and she just left it alone "There's a good one, she's finished ordering those other two around so she's probably Inner Circle."

"What makes you think it's a she?" Harry asked, looking over. "Nevermind, I can tell from her walk."

'Imperio' Tam whispered.

The bickering duo were lead down the wide pedestrianised street, toward an easily forgettable location. Grabbing onto the female Death Eater as they approached what was presumably their destination, the two were physically brought through the Fidelius.

Instantly the other wards on the building began flaring to life, Harry and Tam were forced to batter down a couple of the outer wards, and the Invisibility Cloak took a hit. Surprisingly it wasn't damaged in the slightest, and after a few drawn out moments of furious casting they found themselves in a well put together little hallway. Alarm spells blaring at high volume would have been distracting enough, but coming down the solid wooden staircase was a striking woman wearing a solid gold tiara.

"Good morning Rowena," Harry greeted politely, stepping over the AKed female Death Eater "sorry to drop in unannounced, but we just couldn't resist stopping by."

Rowena didn't reply with any witty banter unfortunately. She did however, fall on the two invaders like an iron clad avalanche. Hammerstrokes of power flew from her wandtip, and single use Runes being activated at odd angles, causing the two to scatter in an uncoordinated way.

'Okay, this is a bloody mismatch if I've ever seen one.' Harry concluded, opening up his 'Crash & Bash' spell-string at the same time as the redhead. Identically paired curses, impacting at exactly the same time, from brother wands; they had noticed the slight boost this gave them back when they were in the Room, during the never to be spoken of events which transpired.

Double 'ossum' spells, cracked the woman's Mage Shield; the duo of Bone Breakers managing to finally get through the woman's

defences. Twofold casting seemed to be making up for the otherwise blatant mismatch.

After a long time, and a few deep gashes suffered to both, Harry and Tam had managed to subdue their opponent. A Killing Curse striking directly to her chest. Unfortunately, right as the host body died, the Diadem once Enchanted by Ravenclaw vanished in what was almost certainly a portkey variant, cheating them from a lasting victory.

"Bollocks!" Harry and Tam exploded together.

They made their way through the rest of the building, taking down a number of other Death Eaters with well drilled ease. After a time Harry's voice attracted his companion's attention "We have some time yet right?" He asked.

"A few minutes, why?"

"Storeroom." Harry informed laconically "Up for some plundering? I think that's a Pensieve."

Bursting into the surprisingly well furnished room ten minutes later, Tam and Harry took in the target of their entire attack on Voldemort's main base. "H-Harry?" Petunia Dursley asked astounded "Y-you came to rescue me?"

Turning to Tam he asked under his breath "Will she survive Luna's Runic Array? I never asked."

"Well I did, idiot." The redhead responded at a whisper. "And she might."

"Yeah," Harry declared confidently, Lockheart smiling at his Aunt "we're here to rescue you, why not. Let's go with that."

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Petunia was frightened, she would readily admit that. She had been ever since those witches and wizards had burned down her home and killed her family, and later captured her when she was out grocery shopping. They had seemed to be under the impression that

her blood was powerful and dangerous, which for all she knew of magic could be the truth.

Petunia's treatment hadn't been too bad over the last few months. Her captors seemed to think she was on par with a farm animal as far as intelligence or consideration went; she'd been given food and a place to sleep, but otherwise was ignored as being beneath them. The time spent alone had concocted horrific scenarios, which luckily hadn't come to pass, so she considered herself surprisingly fortunate under the circumstances.

Now the boy, and what was presumably his girlfriend, had come to rescue her. Why the boy had come for her when she had been so horrible to him was a mystery, but as it was she found herself being directed out of her prison and into open sunshine for the first time in months. Thoughts of what he'd left in her Cell long forgotten.

'Was that Albus Dumbledore?' Petunia gasped, recognising the man from the two times she'd met him.

He, a teenage brunette girl, and a red avian creature were tackling twelve times their number. And seemed to be winning, or at least holding steady. Petunia came up to them and then another group of three, -lead by that awful Sirius Black- came sprinting up from out of an alley.

"Bloody fucking Helga got away from me AGAIN!" A young blonde woman exploded furiously.

Everybody appeared to be looking to the boy for direction. Including Albus Dumbledore, she noted with abhorrence.

"We need to get out of here now!" Sirius Black howled.

The boy, Harry, laughed "Stick to the Code."

"What?" that brunette girl shouted.

The blonde woman smiled along with Harry. "Rule One; Pillage, then Burn."

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Harry had directed a defensive ring to surround Luna and his Aunt. A wide variety of curses were being thrown at the group, but fast hands and faster minds were keeping everyone safe. It took a little under two minutes for his friend to retrieve her Chocobo, Fleur's Cerberus, and Sirius' motorbike from the magically enlarge satchel they were being housed in. With the animals held in a magically endued sleep.

Awake and back under their compulsion charms, the mounts were once again ready for service. Tam and Hermione barely squeezed onto the bike with Sirius. Albus shuffled close to Luna on her Chocobo, with Fleur and Harry getting embarrassingly intimate, while Petunia tagged along on the back of the three headed dog.

Chimeras, Dragons, and Phoenixes leapt from the Elder Wand at Harry's left, all golden and yellow, tinged slightly with blue ribbons running through. From his right, Yew and Phoenix Feather unleashed a mass of serpentine creatures in all manner of reds, wreathed in a coppery hue.

The twin masses of Fiendfyre took up sentry, a big, bold dome of destruction circling the three noble steeds. Motorbike, Chocobo, and Cerberus took off in the direction of the Holy Forest, the edge of the wards, and freedom. Malevolent creatures of fire and destruction, galloping around and above, acting as their protection.

A bounding run, a Fire-Friend Potion, and a Bubble-Head Charm. Two hours later a whispered 'Caerbannog' to the wrist, found the group safe aboard Harry's floating home.

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When they got up to the flight deck and the wide area window which offered a view of the Cursed City they had barely escaped from, Harry poured himself an ice cold pint of his favourite lager from the barrel, and waved for everyone else to do so.

"Take one." He ordered, seeing a few people were about to protest.

"Harry, we made it." Hermione breathed, then pointed over at one of the people in the room. "We actually pulled it off, look your Aunt is right there!"

"Get a drink, and come stand over here." Harry repeated. "You too Aunt Petunia. Come over here it's not over."

Noting Harry's unusually grave appearance the group did as he asked. Eventually eight people were standing side by side, staring over at the magical forest, and the unseen City Voldemort had created with his own hand.

Something on Harry beeped, and he spoke in a tone none of them had ever before heard him use.

"Ladies and gentlemen raise a glass, witness humanity's greatest contribution to the absurd."

Then there was a mushroom cloud.

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Chapter Twenty: Fallout

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"Y-you set off an Atomic Bomb?" was the disbelieving question uttered from the lips of the one truly good person Harry Potter knew. A teenager, who had nice parents, liked books, and was wrapped up in this whole thing for reasons he could not begin to comprehend. Hermione Granger watched the apocalyptic cloud of destruction in a state of numb shock.

"Yes." Harry confirmed, finishing off his cool, fresh tasting beverage. "I detonated a Nuclear Weapon on British Soil."

They all watched in silence for a while, with nobody really knowing what to say. Luna had been frowning at first, but it took her only a moment to conclude in Harry's favour.

"Have you any idea what you have done Harry?" Dumbeldore asked appalled.

He nodded "A fair idea yes."

"When the ICW finds out about this they-"

"Won't do shit!" Harry interrupted. "I am aware of the ICW treaties you helped write, back when that Dark Lady working with Grindlewald was taken out in the Hiroshima explosion. And that is why I intend to lie about what happened here."

"Harry, you can't just..." Tam and Albus said at the same time, but the redhead was the one who finished "...just do something like that. It's horrible. How many people were in that city?"

He didn't reply, but did notice Fleur flawless face had across it a troubled look. However she was simply standing there and not getting involved herself.

"Harry, the Compacts..." Dumbledore attested "...all Signatories are duty bound to assassinate each and every one of us for what you have done."

"I'm going to lie about it, I've thought it through." Harry stated again. "Besides, if they do make a stink about it, I can tell them you had no knowledge of it beforehand. Then I'll swear an Unbreakable Vow that I am being completely honest. It was for this reason I went to such lengths not to tell any of you beforehand."

"Are you certain it wasn't because we would have stopped you?" Hermione challenged.

"Yes Hermione, I am certain you would not have stopped me from doing it."

"Then why? What were you thinking?" Tam asked from her side.

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"...were you thinking?"

"What can I say? It was the right thing to do." Harry said starkly, and noting the dubious looks waved them into silence. He set about pouring himself another drink while thinking about how he was going to explain. "I am not going to spout some pretty words and claim it was all for the Greater Good or anything. Because let's face it that kind of Good would be relative, as well as a load of horseshit.

Still, it was my decision to make. A person needed to carry the Dark Mark to get in, and we used a not-yet-invented principle in brewing the Essence of Snape potion. This meant there could not have been a single innocent in that City. So I chalked it up to being a military target, and therefore fair game.

A Fission Device was the only way I could think of to destroy the whole thing in one go. Bella and I spent a good portion of the Malfoy Gold, spreading around enough cash and Confunding enough Muggles to track one down. Thanks largely to a water bottle filled with Veritaserum, we eventually found this guy in a Turkish Bazaar who had three. They had been lifted from the Russians now that their country is decommissioning, and he was selling them for 40 million US Dollars apiece."

"You gave an Arms Dealer that much money?" Hermione exploded, it was just getting worse and worse.

Shaking his head, Harry corrected "No, Bella put him under an Imperius Curse, and I killed him once we took the weapons." He breathed "Gods alone knows what would have happened had some religious group of crazies got one. And anybody who would sell something that dangerous to the highest bidder, is the kind of person who would be enormously improved by death anyway."

"But we had escaped already," Hermione pointed out "why did you think the City needed to be destroyed?"

"Luna?" Harry asked "How many times has the City of the Dead been successfully infiltrated, in this timeline and the other future?"

"Other than this morning, precisely Zero times Harry." She promptly replied.

"Albus?" Harry went on "What is the sole real weakness of a Jabberwock?"

The old man frowned, before slowly replying "They cannot leave their Magical Forest, even should one be slain the Forest's magic will eventually respawn it."

"Tam?" his green stare moved onto the redhead "Even should we kill Voldemort forever ... do you believe he would have ensured the Jabberwock's instructions would still be followed?"

Tam paused in thought. 'A Jabberwock defending a Forest from people going against Voldemort's will, should he die it would still be attempting to do that.' Aloud she said "Yes, I see. The Holy Forest needed to be destroyed, and we did not have the necessary time to torch the whole thing using Fiendfyre." Then a longer pause "I am with you. I do not like it, but a weapon of mass destruction was the best thing to do."

"Ethically-" Dumbledore began, before a room full of people combined to face him with an identical look. One which screamed 'Weaponised Baby,' at the top of its lungs. And that the only reason they were not saying so out loud, was because of Hermione's presence.

"I want to go back to France 'Arry." Fleur stated in a small voice.

Harry didn't miss a beat and took out a large metal ring he'd had in his pocket the whole time they spent in the City. He'd had a feeling she might ask, but was hoping it wouldn't be needed. "The activation phrase is 'Carry me to Carcassonne, Goodbye Harry,' and it must be uttered in your distinctive timbre."

The stunning woman did so, locked as she was by his big green eyes. Did she look a little sad?

As soon as Fleur vanished Harry let out a long sigh. "I should have kissed her when I had the chance."

Slowly Harry turned to the one person remaining who counted. "Here is the deal Hermione; I don't like it, but still decided that this was the best course of action. For various reasons, nobody else in the room but you matters, and I want you to go away and think about it. Then in a few days, you are to tell me whether or not I'm evil. Understand?"

Hermione looked so shocked at the order she could not speak, so simply nodded once.

"Someone show Aunt Petunia to her room please, I have to go do a thing."

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Luna was overlooking the charred remains of the Holy Forest while Harry left the room. It was a masterpiece, nothing short of it in her opinion. She didn't think the others really understood just what kind of place the City of the Dead was, or had been she supposed would now be more accurate.

'A Thermonuclear Weapon in a Magical war.' Luna thought astounded. She would have never thought of that in a hundred progressions of the Zodiac; Rabbit to Rabbit once every twelve years.

It was not lost on her that Caerbannog seemed to be leisurely circling the recently destroyed City, and on later investigation would learn that the ship was maintaining a huge dome of energy which prevented the radioactive fallout from escaping. Harry really had

thought of everything. He even intended to fund scrubbing the area clean using the last of the Malfoy Vault.

"What thing does he have to do?" Hermione asked after their friend had left.

"Do you want to guess, or shall I simply tell you?" Luna replied. Rolling her eyes at their predictability she continued. "In as much detail as you can remember, what happened to Harry following the Hall of Prophecy Battle?"

"Erm-," Sirius said thinking back "He made sure Tonks was alive didn't he? And that Bellatrix would be treated in the Hospital Wing."

"The next time I saw him, he had shown up with Tam and it was the next afternoon." Hermione added.

"Eight members of the Order of the Phoenix had died at the Ministry." Luna reminded them "He locked himself in the Room of Requirement with three bottles of Firewhiskey, and an alcoholic grade Hangover Remedy." The blonde paused before finishing "Harry hates killing people, or getting them killed. The only reason Tamsyn managed to capture him so easily was because he had fled the Castle early the next morning, so as not to have to talk to anyone." She took another breath. "Exactly the same thing happened after Malfoy Manor, when he'd connected a Killing Curse with someone other than Voldemort for the first time."

These revelations caused an appreciable amount of introspection. After a time Dumbledore took his leave, as did Hermione accompanied by Fawkes. Tam followed shortly after, and with a nod Sirius left the two alone.

"So Mrs. Dursley, what do you think of Harry's home?" Luna asked blandly. The woman was clearly overwhelmed by everything that had happened and did not respond. "Come on, I'll help you find someplace to sleep. Even though it's not yet noon, I'll bet you're as in need of a nap as I am."

"B-but," Petunia stuttered. Eventually vaguely managing an "Impossible!"

"Quite." Luna agreed "One piece of good news however; your estranged sister is probably going to recover from her death, if Harry has anything to say about it at any rate."

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Scampering after Hermione, Tam noticed that she was with that damn bird again. She didn't know how people could stand the sounds it made. The sounds felt like nails were being dragged across the blackboard of her very Soul. Harry had always been indifferent to the effects, take them or leave them, although he still got along quite well with the Phoenix. That was probably because of the whole battling side by side in the Chamber thing. Hermione and a few others always felt strong and uplifted, but Tam really hated being around the immortal creature.

Sucking up her discomfort she closed on her target, seeing that the woman was visibly upset.

"How are you holding up Hermione?" Tam asked reaching her.

That untameable flow of hair was even more wild than usual, and she eventually responded with agitation "Harry, he-, I, accessory to mass murder, I-," Hermione tried to verbalise what she was going through. "...then, asking-, and I'm the only one who..."

In that instant Tam came to a decision, a firm resolution that she knew of one sure way to calm the other girl. Pushing her lithe feminine body up against the chestnut haired teenager, she kissed her. First contact of her full red lips caused the woman to freeze in shock, but slowly, hesitantly, Hermione broke and began kissing back. It went on for a long perfect moment, and the avian took its leave in a blessedly silent flight.

Hermione's first moan of pleasure snapped her out of what was happening, and back to the realities of the situation. "N-no. What are you doing, we can't!" The teenager scrambled "I am a girl, girls don't do this ... You're a girl!" She accused the last.

Not fazed in the least by this reaction, Tam's eyes narrowed predatorily and Hermione got just a little bit scared "That is just it though, I am really not."

Slamming both the brunette's wrists above her head with one hand and pushing the woman up against the wall, Tam held the other girl in position with the ease of her ritual enhanced strength. Tam's predatory gaze was stronger than ever as it stared into her for the longest time. Then she took a forceful kiss from the other girl. Hermione struggled at first until her traitorous body sagged in blissful submission.

A final sane thought cried out in a small voice before being cut down:

'What would my parents think?'

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Luna eventually decided to forgo her nap in favour of butting her nose in where it was not wanted. She'd hit the Muggle with a minor spell from the simplest Earth Seal, and Harry's relative had decided to sleep for a while. Five minutes walk past the Library Luna approached his door and noticed with little surprise that it was covered in Security Charms, and greater surprise when she discovered he'd went with a Shroud of Athena.

"You're spending way too much time with Riddle." The blonde commented to the Ether.

It took an involved few minutes to place a slash in the construct, and alter her magical signature enough to slip through the security without setting it off. Eventually she whispered the 'secret' password and eased open the door. Harry had somehow already finished one bottle, and was working steadily through the second when Luna flopped down beside him and took a big swig of the offered drink.

"Pretty flowers go boom!" Harry declared sensibly. "And some pretty flowers go; 'Wee! Wee! Wee!' all the way home!"

Luna already wished she were more drunk.

"I knew y'know." The inebriated 'world saviour' intimated "Knew as soon as you brought her, that she'd leave once it happened." Then a burp and an unnaturally loud shout "BOOM!"

"Yes Harry, Boom." She agreed. "Honestly, I would have done precisely the same thing had I thought of it."

"Yeah," He said, downing the final a third of his second bottle of Firewhiskey. Had he been a Muggle, he'd have died of alcohol poisoning by now. Accidentally switching to French as fluent as any native Harry continued "How though? I mean, the little ponce is a blood purest, and she's not even totally human ... An-and worse, she watched the ponce kill me, didn't she?"

'Wow, he must be even more hammered than I thought.' Luna decided 'Even pissed Harry never lets this much slip.'

"Honestly, I couldn't tell you." She admitted to her partially conscious companion "I've never gotten close enough to either of them to make any intelligent comment."

"Huh, figures. Useless time travel." He said "I think the Wizengamot's gonna' buy the pile of crap I'm gonna' feed them a' least."

The two worked their way through the third bottle pretty much in silence, and when Harry finally fell into a dangerously alcohol fuelled slumber, Luna commented in a slur "A friggin' 'ope so. They'll kill us without sec'nd thought if ya don'"

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Draco's life had been full of ups and downs in recent history, he mused approaching the final major security section on Level 42, and nodded to Mr. Gibbon. He'd killed Potter, that was when everything had really started to change. Not only was he one of the Inner Circle due to his efforts on behalf of the Dark Lord, but the successful execution of his hated rival had brought with it a sense of having accomplished something, as well as some renown amongst his fellow Death Eaters.

Flanked by his twin Bodyguards Mr. Crabbe and Mr. Goyle, Draco continued across the winding passageways of Level 43, through increased security, making his way toward the next staircase, and yet further down. This was a long trip, he knew from past experience.

With the notoriety earned from his -admittedly fairly lucky-dispatching of their enemy, Draco had been offered a personal lesson in magic from the Dark Lord himself. The near unprecedented nature of this gift made it something of great worth, not just from what would be learned, but for the prestige offered within the organisation.

The lesson had been quite painful.

Draco had been ordered to go all out, to do his utmost to defeat and if possible kill the Dark Lord. Unforgivables were expected not just allowed, and he'd snapped off more than a few 'Avada Kedavra' Curses in the attempt. As well as the best of the Dark Arts he'd been able to pick up from his father and various other sources.

He hadn't come close of course, and the dodging exercise at the end had been, well nothing short of agonising. "Dodge now! 'Crucio,' 'Crucio,' dodge! 'Crucio.'" He shuddered reflexively approaching the stairwell to Level 45.

The thing he'd remembered most from the first lesson however, had nothing to do with magic at all. Draco had been given an insight none of his other tutors had ever offered him before, so he'd thought long and hard on its meaning and more importantly real world application.

"Why was it that no member of the Slytherin line, those of high magical power and purest blood, had taken the world and attempted to reshape it as it needed to be reshaped, for more than five hundred years?" The Dark Lord had asked.

Draco had been recovering from a series of vicious Cruciatus Curses at the time, so his mind may not have been at its swiftest, but he'd been unable to come up with an answer. Nor was he particularly confident he fully understood the question. However the Dark Lord was rarely verbose in his questions and less so in his explanations, therefore Draco listened well while he was being so.

"You have the blood Draco, and should be rightly proud of your ancestry, as I am of mine." He had intimated in his distinctive sibilant tones "Yet it is by wand and will and magic that will make you who you should be. Those who stand on their ancestor's shoulders,

rather than by their own mind and magic, will inevitably find themselves shorter by a head."

Finally making it to his destination on Level 49, Draco sat on his large chair, in his plush office. Across the hall was the Simulacrum only he and six others knew about, and everyone else believed to be a valuable prisoner.

Draco had not at first, understood the Dark Lord's words. He was a Pureblood, he could trace his family tree back more than eleven generations of Purebloods. This gave him the right to rule over the lesser Magicals.

Taking a sip of the small glass of Champaign following a hard sleepless night's work, Draco nodded to himself. One did not discount the Dark Lord's words, especially not when he seemed to be teaching something important. It had taken the loss of his father, and time working through the duties he now had forced on him as Head of Malfoy, before the instruction had permeated.

Greg and Vince were Purebloods from old lines, vassal Houses to that of Malfoy. And as good as those two could be with a wand on occasion, they did not have the will or the magic necessary to make themselves great, in the way the Dark Lord had described.

Potter's surprising return from the dead during the Wizengamot meeting hadn't really affected Draco's status at all, but it made the note he'd received so many months ago, all the more intriguing:

'We appreciate the good works you have achieved during your time in the United States. Enjoy this fine wine courtesy of my private stores.

Signed

Gerard Delacour'

His family didn't shout if from the rooftops, but they hadn't always been blonde.

There was a massive blast of heat and a shuddering explosion, Draco was taken from his seat and slammed into the far wall. Everything went dark.

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Draco woke an indeterminate length of time later with every fibre of his being in agony. It wasn't like the Cruciatus feeling, more a 'my eyes sting like they've been swabbed with bleach' feeling, running through his muscles and joints, even his lips and under fingernails.

He'd been injured. That much was obvious.

"G-uh, Urg!" was about the most sensible statement he could manage, while shaking some of the clouds out of his mind.

Eyes cracking open he noticed that his office was a shambles, and that Vince and Greg were down with pretty nasty injuries themselves. Clumsily retrieving his 10" Unicorn wand, he set about casting some diagnostic spells on the two. Concluding that there was very little he could accomplish here, Draco stuck a medical Stasis on them and transfigured their injured bodies into snakes, which were in turn pocketed using shaky hands.

He spent the next forty five minutes in partial consciousness, recovering as many people as he could. Those who were still alive at any rate, given that a fair percentage of them hadn't survived whatever had happened. Draco had killed the thrashing Simulacrum and pocketed the Rowena Founder's Crown, one of the four items all Senior Death Eaters had been charged with defending using their very lives if need be.

Once he'd made his way up to Level 42 checkpoint's door, Draco learned that nothing above remained at all. Any Death Eaters who had been in the rest of the tower had obviously been destroyed. He activated his emergency portkey back to Malfoy Manor, having not really believed it would work he was surprised to find himself in the main hallway.

A frantic woman with long blonde hair came barrelling into the entrance hall, all proper decorum long forgotten, and Draco managed a few words "Hello mother dear..."

Whatever he was going to say was lost by means of his introduction to the floor.

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No Muggle in history had ever experienced a hangover like it. This was mostly due to the fact that consuming enough alcohol to earn one like it would result in a person's death. In the event that said person did not have innate magic coming to their aid anyway.

Harry would never learn that it was so bad that it broke through Voldemort's advanced Soul Occlusion, and that the sensation on his end could be described as a big warm hug. Pleasant and uplifting.

He managed to get to the shower and turn it on full belt, just below boiling. There was an evens chance that his clothes were still on, and zero chance they could be rescued from all the vomit staining. Harry downed the tiny tar-like potion, and stood under the scorching blasts of water. With one eye barely cracked open he watched the black sticky beads of toxin force their way through the pores of his skin, oh the delicious sobering pain of it.

It felt like someone was separating all of the negative fluids from his body and pushing them agonisingly through his skin. Oh wait; that's exactly what the potion was doing, and it hurt like fucking crap!

Thirty minutes later he was clean, dressed, sober, and ready for a new day.

He made his way through a number of corridors, across the bridge, and up a few flights of stairs. Eventually he came to the flight deck where Sirius and Dumbledore were having a muted discussion. "What's up Doc?" He asked, gnawing his breakfast carrot.

"No sign of Hermione." Sirius informed, causing Harry to shrug. She'd decide as she would, there was no point rushing her.

They talked for a while and Dumbledore eventually voiced his chosen course of action. "I intend to spin back six hours and make an assessment of our current situation. I have no doubt there will be questions."

With that he pulled out his personal Time-Turner and Harry managed to keep a straight face, albeit barely, as the Headmaster vanished from sight.

"What's so funny there Harry?" Padfoot asked, noting his godson's amusement.

"We're in an airship." He replied shortly. Not ten seconds later a silvery Phoenix coalesced between the two, and spoke with the old man's voice.

"There is a Wizengamot meeting at six o'clock this evening, do not be late" Then a pause "And I did not appreciate your prank Harry!"

This caused the raven haired man to burst out laughing. Sirius was confused for a moment, before he figured out that Dumbledore must have reappeared a mile up, with nothing but clear air to support him. "Oh I wish I could have seen his face."

"Yeah" Harry laughed in agreement. After amusement faded he moved his godfather over to a set of Control Runes. "It looks as though I'm going to be busy, so you're going to have to do this."

"Hm?" Sirius replied looking over the softly glowing runes.

"While you guys were forging all those Valyrian bullets and going over different plans, I was coming up with a way to contain the radiation released by my big finish." He informed "I did a crap load of super redundant Arithmancy to make sure my calculations were spot on. Anyway, I created a bubble ward all the way around the City of the Dead and had Caerbannog charging it. Once the ship has completed its forty fourth pass, the 'Eihwaz' Rune will light up and I need you to activate it."

"Okay," Padfoot agreed dubiously "what will it do?"

"Collapse the ward." Harry answered "Hopefully it will take most of the contamination with it. It should do anyway; getting this thing to work was harder and more expensive than acquiring the Bomb."

"No problem. When do you think it'll have charged?"

"A couple of hours probably, so sometime late this afternoon." Harry finished "Have a scope around the centre after you're done if you get the chance. There might be something cool left behind."

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"Harry, you're going to be late!" Hermione shouted at him. She hadn't made up her mind yet, but at least she was still speaking to him.

"I don't care, I'm not going without it." He stated, rooting through the piles of detritus strewn around his room. "Your hair looks great by the way."

The brunette frowned, it was the fourth time she'd heard that today. Luna came on the scene, "What's he doing?"

"I don't know." She said "Looking for something apparently."

"A-ha!" Harry declared triumphantly "Found you!"

"Oh that is the coolest thing I've ever seen." Luna declared as Hermione face palmed. "Can you get me one?"

"Sure."

One minute to six found Harry striding confidently into the Wizengamot chamber, wearing full formal attire, and with rampant Griffon standing proudly on his shoulder's declaration patch. Long jet black facial hair tucked into his belt completed the look, a wise and imposing leader-type like him who was not to be trifled with lightly.

'And Hermione thought I should do this without my Senating Beard. She must be crazy.'

Taking in this sight, the Wizengamot members who had shown up collectively groaned; he was wearing the Beard again. Last meeting Harry had attempted to pass Zeppelin legislation, citing the aforementioned beard as one of the main reasons they should listen to his arguments.

Seeing that he was about to make some ridiculous opening comment, one of the members threw out the reason they were here. "The village of Greater Hangleton, colloquially know as the City of the Dead, has been completely destroyed. What did you do?"

Sighing at having been prevented from making his awesome opening comment, Harry just answered the question, while quietly mourning his lost opportunity. "I don't remember."

"What?" The Chief Warlock exploded. Not only was Harry wearing the Beard, but he didn't even have a plan to prevent them all from being murdered by the ICW.

"I Obliviated myself." Harry went on. "Several weeks ago I devised a method of setting off a Fiendfyre Cascade, using a timed Rune Set..." He lied smoothly. "...Lord Voldemort's city needed to be destroyed, and it was the only thing I could think of to pull it off. The Arithmancy involved must have been incredibly complex, and I still recall how expensive the Smokey Black Diamond I used as a rune stone was to purchase.

Once I had completed the process, which is completely within the rights you granted me when I agreed to help fight your war by the way. Once I'd completed it, I decided that the knowledge was far too dangerous even for me to have. So I destroyed all of my notes, and Obliviated myself. The ability to destroy an entire City magically is the kind of thing which led to the Atlantis Cataclysm, and I'm in no hurry to set something like that off."

The room discussed this for a while, talking about whether or not it was within his rights, and none of them really questioning Harry's word concerning what had happened. Sirius would have scrubbed the area by now, so there shouldn't be any evidence to the contrary.

Unclipping his fake black beard, Harry cheerfully swept from the room.

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"Somebody set off a Nuclear Weapon on Our Island!" Elizabeth Windsor, Defender of the Faith, Queen of England bellowed at the top of her lungs late the next day. "Who?"

"Their Minister has informed me it was one of their more ... prominent ... citizens." The Prime Minister of Great Britain replied over the phone.

"Bring him too me." The enraged monarch ordered. "Right this instant!"

There was a long pause, some muttering, and what was clearly a muffled conversation containing more than a little heat.

"They are asking whether or not we have Zeppelin access."

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Lens of Sanity

The Emma Watson & Karen Gillan kiss I assume is a DVD Easter Egg, is not something I'd advise in real life for a first kiss, if you misread the situation I hope the girl hurts you! lol ... Mr. Naginator gave me the idea for the Draco scene. Who's liking him as both competent AND a Death Eater? He's usually useless except when Harry's bestest friend ... BTW Nuclear Weapons don't penetrate the ground too well, so Draco probably would've survived.

Chapter Twenty One: Karmic Bypass

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Hermione Granger was lying in bed staring up at the ceiling. She'd taken note of the predominant Slytherin colours which adorned the rest of the room, and now was staring without thought directly overhead. She was pointedly not in her own room. And that was bad. Very bad.

She should be in her own room. That was where she should be. Definitely. She should definitely be in her own room.

...

She was going to be in so much trouble.

The green tones were pleasing to the eye, relaxing, and stylish, if a touch on the grandiose side. A lot like her friend really, now that the idea crossed her mind. Hermione had gotten closer with a new friend ever since Harry had survived his death, mainly due to the fact that Tam was one of the few sensible people in her life. A girl who didn't appreciate all of the foolishness people like Luna and Harry threw around without even thinking about it.

The girl had always been around when she needed a helping hand, or wanted to talk through some new theory she'd been reading in a book. Although on the other side, had some very disturbing notions as to the application of magic, most of which was uncomfortably Dark in nature. Still, she was intelligent, and could on regular occasions provide illuminating insight when the two were conversing.

A mass of voluminous crimson hair shifted on Hermione's chest. Oh no! She was waking up. And that was bad. Very bad.

She definitely shouldn't be here!

Hermione found herself pinned by that brown eyed look which made her feel like a tiny mouse, one which had been cornered by a gigantic Viper. "T-Tam y-" She tried in a small voice. Then those lithe, supple fingers of hers began to move. When those large soft lips began trailing their way down her abdomen, she spoke again "S-stop. Please?"

After a time Hermione let out a small gasp as her breath caught, and the redhead stopped instantly. Looking over her flushed skin and goosefleshed state, Tam acquiesced "Okay, Hermione. You wanted me to stop. So I stopped."

'Now that was just so unfair!'

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Hermione walked the halls of Harry's airship lost in thought. It was noon, a little over twenty four hours since the ethically dubious climax of their fortress infiltration. She still hadn't made up her mind about that, but with all of the other far more immediate concerns, the destruction of an entire city in a single blow had been put on the back burner.

Passing her Library -she shivered- on the way to find her friends, Hermione was lost in thought as had been said. Tamsyn had made her do all kinds of terrible things, and Hermione had tried to make her stop, but she wouldn't. And then this morning she had attempted to escape, and Tam had stopped her, forcing her to do more things. Afterwards, when the redhead had gotten her way, she had forced Hermione into a shower to 'clean up,' and that hadn't gone well at all either.

She didn't know what had happened. Wait! That was it! Tam was evil, this much was obvious, and she used all kinds of horrid Dark Magic every single day. The proclivity toward Dark Magic meant that she was probably an expert caster of the Imperius Curse. Therefore the only sensible conclusion was that she, Hermione, had been put under the Imperius Curse by Tam at some point in the recent past.

Coming across Sirius and Luna, she took in that both of them complimented her on her hair for some reason. Which was strange because her hair was notoriously a nightmare. Regardless, they did not know where Harry was, so she continued on her search.

Right then, well now she knew she was under the effects of the Imperus, she could begin doing something about it. In fact, from her fourth year experience under that awful Curse, Hermione knew that there was a calming sense of euphoria which helped the recipient relax and follow orders. And Hermione was certainly feeling those

kinds of effects right now, so it just added credence to her whole Imperius theory.

Now, what did the books tell her about fighting off the Unforgivable? It was all willpower. If Hermione could get her willpower strong enough to begin seriously questioning Tam's nefarious orders, then she needn't have a stronger will, only strong enough. Then she could break the effects.

It was simple.

All she had to do was say 'No!'

"Hello Hermione," Tam greeted from her position lounging around the main room "have you seen Harry?"

"No!" Hermione asserted forcefully, before the evil immoral redhead kissed her.

'Damn! So close.'

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It was nearing midnight and the Prime Minister was sitting alone in his office, reading a long memo that was slipping through his brain without leaving the slightest trace of meaning behind. There had been what was presumably a terrorist attack a little over thirty six hours ago, and as such normal memos really couldn't hold his focus to any great extent.

He turned over the second page of the memo, saw how much longer it went on, and gave it up as a bad job. Stretching his arms above his head he looked around his handsome office, a fine marble fireplace facing the long sash windows. Of course they were firmly closed against the unseasonable cold they'd been experiencing despite it being late August.

His aide came in a short while later, and set about a long garbled briefing. The repeated use of words like 'Impossible' and 'Preposterous,' had primed the stately politician sufficiently to make an educated guess. There had unquestionably been a detonation on British Soil, however his aide was informing him that the fact finders who were investigating, found that none of the radioactive fallout

was progressing much beyond a few miles of the blast zone. A sleepy out of the way village of no military or strategic importance whatsoever.

This impossible 'bubble' which was being described to him, and the news that the whole scene seemed to have now vanished, screamed one thing; 'It was them!'

He knew it.

Somehow it was them, and they were going to give him some answers. Chasing out his aide the Prime Minister moved over to a dirty oil painting in the far corner of the room, depicting a froglike little man wearing a long silver wig. Tapping the frame and glaring with menace, the Prime Minister spoke in command to the stationary figure.

"Get the Other Minister here right this instant!"

Thirty minutes later he was face to face with the Other Minister, a man with a shaggy appearance more lined with gray than last time the two had been in discussion. He proceeded to explain the Magical side of the story, and how one of their citizens had magiced a device which was used to destroy the ... City?

Had he heard that right? The Prime Minister's sources indicated less than a thousand inhabitants.

Regardless, the story seemed a little off to the politician, in that he doubted any such magical device had actually been used. The fact finders collected enough data to track down exactly which Nuclear Device had been set off for god sake. They'd used some kind of radioactive spectrum process which didn't seem important, and so the Prime Minister knew the thing to be one of Russian design believed to have been decommissioned.

As this was one of the few times in which the Prime Minister seemed to be better informed than his magical colleague, he decided not to share this morsel of information.

"I wish to meet this Harry Potter character." He concluded.

"Well, there may be a slight problem with that," the man informed with frustration "he rarely answers his Mirror. And even when he does, you're lucky to get any useful information out of him at all."

The man, Scrimgeour, seemed legitimately irritated when admitting this. "What do you mean? You are supposed to be in charge of your side of the government are you not? One man should be of little consequence regardless of how well connected."

"It's not that." Scrimgeour attested "The previous administration threw him in Azkaban despite the fact that he was completely innocent, and he doesn't particularly like the Ministry."

There was obviously more too it, but the Prime Minister didn't think he'd get the full story. A young red haired assistant whose name he instantly forgot, came through the fireplace a short time later carrying a hand mirror. The assistant was forced to hold the thing for him, as he was not magical himself and so couldn't operate it.

An extremely attractive woman with heavily lidded purple eyes greeted him distractedly when he looked into the mirror.

She was not helpful.

At the his request, she was replaced by a blonde woman he'd place in her mid twenties.

The Prime Minister was suffering a headache by the end of the blonde's first sentence.

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Travelling with Luna and Bellatrix on the 24th of August, Harry was approaching Craigowan Lodge, whose appearance was being dominated by the shadow cast from his floating home. The Queen was currently residing in the seven bedroom stone house about a mile from the main castle in Balmoral, and luckily the flight hadn't taken too long. Harry had something important to do today, and would not have bothered showing up at all if not for the fact that the Crown apparently still had some authority over British Magicals.

Hermione had refused his offer to accompany him for reasons Harry was starting to have deep seated suspicions about. She'd instead

made sure he understood this was the Queen he was meeting, and that he had to be respectful. And she'd probably said some more things too, but Harry had only been half listening, so he may have missed some of it.

"Our entourage has been summoned by the monarch." Bellatrix Black intoned to the guard utilising her underused aristocratic mannerisms. "We do not have all day." She finished dismissively.

A short time later the three were standing before the Queen in a modest greeting room, with Luna and Bellatrix flanking Lord Potter on both sides, and standing deferentially so that it was clear Harry was the centre of attention.

"Is this some kind of joke?" The monarch asked icily.

Not replying, Harry instead made a grand show of bowing respectfully. He was working hard to prevent his nose from twitching, or his menacing ears from intimidating the woman.

"Well!" She demanded impatiently. Seeing that neither human was going to reply any time soon she went on, attempting to pin Bellatrix with a threatening glare. "I demanded the presence of Harry Potter, where is he?"

"Right here Your Majesty." Luna promptly replied, gesturing to the individual in question respectfully. Man but Luna could keep a straight face like a pro.

"The rabbit?" She asked dangerously "Do you believe that because you are one of Our Magical citizens you can garner some amusemen-"

Then Harry was standing there in the formal robes his family tome had informed him were appropriate when summoned by the Crown, unwieldy Vorpall Sword strapped to his back, and giving his best effort at a commanding presence. There was an off chance it would help.

The Queen's gasping in surprise, coupled with a potentially deadly weapon on his back, caused the three guards to level SA80's at Harry and all but open fire.

"Whoa! Calm yourselves there kids," Harry ordered "you don't want someone to get hurt." That last may or may not have been left ambiguous intentionally.

He must have made a sudden move or something, because after a few moments hesitation the three guards opened fire. Seeing this happen Luna casually lifted her right hand with splayed fingers and softly intoned a single syllable:

"No."

Every single one of the bullets careening toward the three slowed visibly, eventually halting in midair harmlessly. The blonde then picked one from the air and examined it curiously before nodding once, causing the rest to fall to the floor.

'That was pretty fucking cool.' Harry declared silently in his own mind, he'd have to learn that at some point. Aloud he turned back to the Queen and said "Now that killing us didn't work, could we move it along please?"

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Hermione was standing behind the large wooden ships wheel piloting the Caravel of Caerbannog, and mused idly that the name really wasn't all that bad. It had obviously grown on her since all those attempts to have Harry name the thing something sensible. Steering the Airship was actually quite fun she decided, and also came to the resolution to do it more often.

Merlin alone knew what was going on with Harry at the same time, but Hermione simply couldn't bring herself to go with him when he met with the Queen of England. Even though it was obvious something was going to happen which she should be there for, on the off chance she could prevent whatever it was from going too badly.

No. She couldn't bring herself to get involved with something else when her mind was already so occupied with other things. The biggest and most glaring of which was a discovery most unfortunate in its implications.

Hermione was not, it eventually turned out, under the Imperius Curse.

And that was bad. Very bad.

She span the wheel and the ship lurched dangerously before righting itself. Okay, she'd admit doing that was pretty fun. Not out loud, but she would admit it to herself.

Her life would have been so much simpler had she just been under the Imperius Curse. Now she had to be all stupid and Griffindorish, because she knew what she had to do. And she had no idea what the fallout was going to be like.

No idea at all.

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From his position seated atop a Giant Tortoise, Harry was rubbing his temples and finally reaching the end of his tether. "Fine!" He exploded, less than fifteen minutes after entering the room. "You win now shut the hell up."

Given that this was possibly the first time in decades someone had spoken to her in such a way, Elizabeth Windsor controlled herself admirably. "So you admit to setting off a Nuclear Bomb on the British Isles." She pushed in coldly.

"Yes," Harry confirmed "and you are going to have to promise not to tell anybody. If the international community figure it out, all my friends are going to be facing such a shitstorm. It'll make recapturing the Falkland Islands look like a snap."

"What makes you believe a petulant child with a hereditary title can make demands of Us?"

The constant use of the Plural was beginning to annoy him, Harry was certain she knew it, and was sure she was using it on purpose. "We saved your daughter in law's life!"

"What?"

"The Princess of Wales was apparently killed in a car accident sometime next year by a drunken chauffeur," Harry intimated, gesturing to his friend "and Luna there found the guy and memory charmed him into moving to South Africa."

"Was killed, next year?" The Queen asked confused.

Harry frowned and pinched the bridge of his nose "Did I not mention the time travel?"

The small group then spent the next hour and a half discussing a future that never happened, how the world was conquered by a half crazy, half insane madman, and how Luna came back to help Harry ensure things turned out differently. The bodyguards were Oblivated once the Queen agreed to keep their secret. One word to the wrong Magical could have spelled doom for the group, and it turned out that the Prime Minister had come within a hair's breadth of blabbing to Scrimgeour before they could start damage control at all!

"And this Fiendish Cascading Firebomb you told the Magical community of..." Liz asked leadingly.

And Harry finished "...Is a red herring. I'm hoping that in years to come it will end up known as the 'Riddle of Potter' or something, because the idea was a masterpiece." He paused, noticing the surprisingly friendly nature their conversation had taken. "The Arithmancy and Spellcrafting look as though they will work. Only the person attempting to re-create my made-up device, will solve one problem only to be confronted by two more. My hope is that Dark Wizards and Witches attempting to construct a magical city destroying weapon will waste tremendous effort and energy on a hopeless cause, instead of hurting random people and making a nuisance of themselves."

The monarch mulled this over for a while. "Quite thoughtful of you now that I think on it." She commented "Not the kind of thing I would expect from the decedent of a man who you claim was made a Lord, because of his actions against-"

"Please don't mention that again..." Harry pleaded "...how do you think I felt when I found out that little family fact?" Having been interrupted more times over the last ninety minutes than in the last

nineteen years, the Queen did not bother to chastise. "Well I have something to do today, so if you have any more questions..."

He trailed off "...actually, I do have one more important thing to ask you."

"Yes?" Liz enquired.

"Is that a Rolls you have parked out front?"

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Passing through long open roads, along motorways, and eventually down narrow suburban streets, Harry was enjoying the drive. He never took enough time to enjoy the simple things, and the soft leather and smooth ride of this luxury car definitely counted as something which needed to be enjoyed.

All too soon he stepped onto the pavement of his destination on the outskirts of Oxford once again. Strolling up to Hermione's surprisingly well warded home he ratted on the door and was whisked in by his close friend Emma, who began nattering about everything that had been going on in her life since they last met up for coffee.

Eventually Hermione's father came in and was visibly perturbed by the cosy nature of the conversation, and would later explode when he found out how regularly the two met up to chat.

Turning to the imposing man, Harry stood "Ah, Mr. Granger a pleasure as always."

The friendly smile and demeanour briefly left Hermione's father with a loss for words, but he managed an eloquent "Kgah-!"

"Now I wish this was simply a social call, however there is something quite serious I must ask you and your lovely wife." Harry went on determinedly.

"What is it Harry dear?" Emma asked with concern.

Looking the man directly in the eye with resolve, the black haired teenager said "I would like your permission to ask for your daughter's hand in marriage."

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Dan Granger was slumped on the floor of his study two hours later. The place was a mess, absolute total devastation. All of his medical journals were ripped and torn, loose pages littering the carpet, which was ripped in places itself.

The snow globe his mother Mary Granger had bought him as a souvenir from her trip to the Azores was in pieces, the tinted water it had contained staining his heavy wooden desk. His rage and desperation had shredded the photographs of his beautiful family, and they to lay scattered on the around his study.

The world was over.

His baby, his beautiful little girl, was going to marry that monster. He just knew it! Nothing he could possibly say would dissuade her once his angel made up her mind. And even Emma, his traitorous better half, was going to side against him.

God alone knew what that ... person ... was making his little girl do at night. A boy like him would undoubtedly have her acting in ways she would think abhorrent, and making her think it was her own idea!

Dan shuddered as his overactive imagination spiralled out of control, bringing to the forefront of his mind scene after scene of depravity. 'Hermione was always such a sweet little girl' the man thought, his hands shaking.

There was only one thing he could reasonably do to stop this. There were a few niggling problems as to the logistics, but even if he were caught it would be worth it.

Dan Granger had to kill Harry Potter.

It was the only sensible course of action. Okay, so the boy was a wizard and that made things more difficult. Nevertheless witches and wizards were still human, Hermione had said so, and they could

die just like anyone else. Only well, that bastard Potter had apparently survived his death once already...

Dan almost started to cry; was there anything he could do at all?

He heard someone at the front door, and then heard the front door open, and then heard Emma call "Dan can you come downstairs for a moment, Hermione has something she would like to tell us."

Dan numbly got to his feet and went downstairs, bracing himself to hear news of the apocalypse from his daughter's lips.

When Hermione informed him that she was in a same sex relationship with a girl she'd met at school, Dan physically cried for joy. The relief was just that strong.

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"Confundo" Harry shouted, thinking 'Stupid bloody police, I really need to learn Memory Charms at some point!'

Stepping out the wreckage of a Rolls Royce Silver Spirit he checked himself over and noted a few bumps and scrapes, but no lasting injuries. Being a Wizard was awesome, how he ever believed Lily and James Potter could have possibly died in a car crash he'd never know. Taking a couple of moments to ensure none of the Muggles were seriously hurt, Harry then ran off to find a quiet place from which he could Apparate away.

Reappearing noiselessly in a small dirty alleyway in London he let out a brief sigh and loosened his aching shoulder, making his way toward the mostly refurbished Order Headquarters at Twelve Grimmauld Place. After a brief conversation with the Weasley twins, and the purchase of a small pod-like cartridge about the size of his arm, Harry was confronted by Tonks.

"I can't believe you got away with it!" The metamorphmagus declared.

Tilting his head to the side Harry responded "Got away with what?"

"Setting off a -umph-"

"A Fiendfyre Cascade!" Harry interrupted forcefully, hand over her mouth. "You should not have been told! How did you even know?"

"Luna was questioning Aunt Bellatrix and didn't notice I was in the room." Tonks admitted warily, not really liking the unaccustomedly fierce expression. "And I won't tell anyone if it's that important. I was just amazed you managed to get the Queen to sign off on it."

Harry's expression brightened to his more familiar, annoyingly cheerful appearance. "I think it was Luna's assertion that the most challenging aspect of Time Travel was grammar, which went the furthest in convincing her."

Was Tonks rubbing up against him more than usual?

"You seriously can get away with absolutely anything can't you." The surprisingly pretty twenty three year old stated in amazement.

"Anyway, school starts back up in a week so what we going to do now?" Harry asked rhetorically, moving into the sitting room and whoever was hanging around headquarters.

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"It still hasn't worn off Harry!" Hermione chastised from her cosy position next to her girlfriend.

"Will someone please tell me why the fucking hell I'm riding the Express AGAIN!" Harry shouted. "Honestly, I'm a legal adult and Sirius has no authority over me. And I even spent last night in the Castle for Merlin's sake. I had to Apparate to Kings Cross just to board the train to go back to ... oh wait, the exact same friggin' Castle!"

Everybody in the compartment ignored Harry's rant with practiced ease. He made it every single time he rode on the Hogwarts Express, so it was nothing new.

"When are you going to release it then?" Tam asked.

"Release what?"

"The Morph." Tam nudged patiently "She is stuck in that crazy heterochromatic blue haired Morph Luna made up ages ago, and everyone knows it was you."

"What makes you think it was me?" Harry asked defensively.

Luna, who really had no need to be here either, snorted in amusement "She came flying out of your room, completely naked and looking like that." Seeing Harry was going to protest she finished "Give it up, it was obviously you ... although I am interested in what she did."

Toying with the idea of proclaiming his innocence, Harry gave it up as a bad job. "She tried to shag me."

"And you were against that happening?" Hermione asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Well yeah. No... Yes and no." he confirmed helpfully. "I think she was doing it as a thank you or something stupid like that. If she wanted to shag me for the hell of it, then it'd be the same as if you wanted to Hermione. But as a thank you for something?" his face twisted "That's just wrong."

Hermione looked a little bit thoughtful, but Tam's eyes narrowed dangerously at him. Giving the raven haired sixteen year old a distinctly menacing red-glowy feeling, despite the fact that their colour remained a soft brown.

Seeing this Luna stepped in "Well Tonks has been stuck like that for a week, when are you going to release her?"

"Huh?" Harry said "Oh, I'm actually quite surprised she hasn't worked it out for herself yet. I only put a moderate Confusion Curse on her, so that when she tries to morph she gets distracted. The reason Tonks' still stuck is because I told her she'd be stuck until I allowed her to change."

"So it's mostly psychological?" The blonde asked in good humour.

"Yep, pretty sneaky eh?" After a while chatting about nothing, something occurred to him "Did you and Albus ever pull off Enchanting a new Sorting Hat Hermione?"

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"Why is the new Sorting Hat singing in an unconvincing scouse accent?" Harry asked in dismay from his position slouched at Gryffindor table.

"It was the best we could do." Hermione responded "The Headmaster and I successfully made five, and that was the best one."

"What about the other four?"

"Well, two of them just Sorted everybody into Hufflepuff," she replied "and one of them spoke Spanish on par with your French."

Ignoring her obvious jealousy when it came to his awe inspiring command of the French language Harry gestured for his wavy haired friend to finish, prompting "And the fifth?"

"Had something of an angry personality." Hermione answered wearily. "It upset Bellatrix and she torched it with Fiendfyre."

"Oh" was all he said, concluding that Bella probably had a good reason.

As Harry drifted off watching the Sorting, Hermione was deep in contemplation. Following the meeting a week prior with her niece, and surprisingly accepting parents, she and Tam had come to an agreement. Tam had eventually agreed not to do too much evil, promised not to ever put her under the Imperius Curse, and that she would never make Hermione do anything she really didn't want to do.

Hermione couldn't exactly shake the feeling that the redhead found her demands amusing, and was carefully repressing the emotion when the two had talked. Nevertheless she had agreed, and now Hermione believed she could keep the other girl in line for the most part, by simple force of will. That she could fight whatever nefarious influence the other girl seemed to have over her.

So long as the redhead did not find herself in some kind of position of power over her, Hermione considered herself level headed enough to avoid getting too caught up in things. Providing everything

at Hogwarts went on as it had been for the last week of the summer, things should settle into a more stable pattern over the coming year. That was as long as the status quo remained the same at any rate.

"...and introducing this year's Defence Against the Dark Arts instructor; Professor Tamsyn Riddle."

"Son of a bitch!" Hermione uncharacteristically swore loudly.

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It was late evening on the First of September. Fleur and Robért had enjoyed such a wonderful day, all kinds of excitement and fun. The two had been to new places and taken pleasure from interesting experiences.

Robért had taken her by portkey to Rome following a luxurious breakfast in her favourite restaurant in Carcassonne, and the two had spent the whole morning shopping. In the afternoon they had sat a short safety briefing and then they were up high in the sky on one of those Muggle aeroplanes, which they then proceeded to jump out of. Skydiving was certainly a new and exciting experience for the French woman.

They had been served a lavish meal accompanied by fine wine, and then gone on a starlit turn around a lake in a boat shaped like a swan. Robért had told her she was beautiful, and the two had kissed. It had been a magical time spent together, one she would no doubt remember fondly for the rest of her days.

So why in the name of Merlin was she so gods damned bored?

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Chapter Twenty Two: An Apprentice and a Wandcrafter

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"I must say, dying is a singularly unpleasant experience My Lord." Rowena commented, flicking back a lock of her coppery hair "Although I will say that surviving the process goes a long way in making it bearable."

A few of the Death Eaters chuckled at this, as did the fop Salazar. Rowena understood the logic of having the man around, and would even admit he could inspire loyalty in his followers better than any of them, but something about wearing lilac just made her wand to harm him.

While the Founders did not have any form of strict hierarchy, some of them did defer to others in certain situations. Rowena being the second eldest at twenty five would tend to stand higher than Salazar, who had been created while still in England. Around the same time as Hepzibah Smith met her demise and Helga, the youngest, had been formed.

That being said, Helga stood higher than even Godric, by simple virtue of scaring the shit out of the other three Founders with her brutally straightforward attitude. Now the thought occurred to her, she decided that lilac wasn't too bad, at least Rowena knew she could take her irritating associate with ease. Lockheart had such a pathetic Core it should be considered amusing.

Rowena brought her mighty intellect back to the fore, having processed all those musings in a fraction of the time it would have taken anyone else.

"May I enquire as to what happened, Founder?" Draco asked her from his seat as Voldemort's right. Their Lord seemed content to watch silently for the time being, but it was no insult. This was Lord Malfoy's Manor house after all, and the man had repeatedly proven his usefulness. Most recently in the rescue of thirty high ranking Death Eaters as well as her Founders Object, an event Draco was still visibly recovering from.

"Potter and Riddle overpowered me." Rowena admitted. "It was not due to surprise either. The two worked together seamlessly,

battered down my shields and struck me with double cast Killing Curses..." following a glance down at her new, well suited Gregorovitch wand, she finished "...they are far more powerful than we anticipated."

Some of the Death Eaters muttered amongst themselves for a time. Losing the City of the Dead was a harsh blow. The numbers and recourses in that stronghold could not be easily replaced, nor could the strength be restored at all in the short term. The Fiendfyre Cascade their enemies had created, destroyed everything on the surface as though none of it were ever there. Brutal depression effects penetrated the subsoil, causing total devastation to the first twenty one Levels, and a shockwave collapsing the walls and floors everywhere down to Level forty two.

However the Necropolis was reinforced and warded as securely as anywhere on Earth, so the attack had not ended with everybody's death. Out of all of them Draco Malfoy was the sole Death Eater to regain consciousness under his own power, and despite numerous severe injuries managed to salvage what he could. Thereby increasing his legend amongst the rank and file, to heights never before reached by the previous Lord Malfoy.

"Our Plans have changed." Voldemort stated aloud for the first time. "Rowena, you are to work closely with Helga in her attempts to devise a method of replicating Potter's weapon. I however have work to accomplish alone."

Voldemort's red eyes looked down at his wand as he said this. It was something which had been frustrating their Master for many months and unless she missed her guess, Voldemort was on a quest to rectify the problem.

Their leader swept from the room and Rowena left through a different exit. She absently heard the meeting continue behind her.

"Yes Grayback," Draco presumably waved the werewolf over "what assistance do you require to get your pack back to full strength?"

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"Avast ye naïve, scabrous cur! I do be challenging y'all to an Honour Duel, for ye nay being worthy of teaching in this ancientest Castle

school." Harry said following Professor Riddle's opening comments on the first day of term.

The woman face palmed hard, and turned to her charge. "Harry, what did you promise Albus?" she asked pleadingly "What did you promise him not forty eight hours ago?"

"I don't remember." Harry replied before switching back to his pirate voice "So will ye Duel me, or do ya be a coward. Avast!"

"You don't even use the word 'Avast' in an appropriate way..." Tam commented in dismay "...and you promised NOT to be an overly disruptive influence, remember?"

"I may have, but I didn't think this counted as disruptive. Does it?"

"Yes!"

"Oh." Then Harry was quiet for a while as he scratched his head. "So you gonna fight me or what?"

"Fine!" Tam acquiesced, knowing it was probably the fastest way to shut the annoying Gryffindor up. "Oh, and Ms. Granger ... Detention."

"What!" Hermione squeaked in protest.

"You were charged with keeping him in line, so you get the detention." The redhead finished with a worrisome smile. "Come on then Harry, have it!"

Harry scuttled to the front of the class with visible enthusiasm, throwing up a few temporary duelling wards and fishing out his Horntail wand. They bowed and Harry instantly sub-vocalised 'Ignis-Nocens Maleficus' shooting out a malevolent crimson torpedo.

"Son of a Bitch!" Tam screamed as she nonverbally raised an Imprimus Shield. Harry never opened with instantly lethal magic, nevermind blatantly Dark Magic like Devil's Fire, so the redhead was caught totally off guard.

Five Peanut-Panthers came bounding at her, and Tam hastily constructed a Ribbon Rod which might have been used by a dancer.

That's except for the fact that the emerald streamer was superheated razor wire, which butchered the predators with ease.

Tam flash boiled a trio of Ice Lances and caught a flight of poisoned darts with Luna's sticky shield before managing to regain the initiative, squeezing through the gap a time-escalating Disheartening Jinx which Harry probably didn't know the counter for. The two got into a pretty even back and forth over the next couple of minutes; palming, parrying, dodging, and countering. It was a short while later before both were cut and scorched, and Harry was trussed up in barbed wire, the apparent loser of their unexpected exhibition bout.

"Do you wish to attend the Hospital Wing Mr. Potter?" Professor Riddle asked sweetly, once she'd released him and administered the counter-jinx.

Trying to work out whether the deafness in his left ear was temporary or not, Harry just grinned "Not on your life Professor."

"And I trust there will be no further distractions." He just winked, and sat himself with the wide-eyed, disbelieving class of sixth year N.E.W.T. students.

Harry didn't expect her to thank him, but they had just demonstrated Tam's bona fides to the whole friggin' school.

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That was the thing about wands, and the sole fact non-wandmakers knew about the craft; the wand chooses the wizard. Voldemort knew as much, if not more about wandlore, than pretty much anyone who was not a Master Wandmaker. So he knew the wand chooses the wizard with greater understanding than most.

There were ways around this of course. Not every Magical used a wand which had chosen them. The very idea was ludicrous. No, if an ally freely allowed a person to use their wand, it would work in line with a Magical far better than a standard wand, and infinitely better than an unfriendly wand. It was the same with capturing; a process the Dark Lord was most familiar with. Fighting and defeating an enemy, and then taking the wand a defeated foe had been using, it was like a branch of magic unto itself.

The wand he was currently using, his favourite captured wand, had been taken in the greatest Duel of his life. Back in the mid fifties Voldemort, under the name 'Drágen,' had invested considerable time and effort working his way up the chain of illegal, no limit duelling pits. Acting the prize fighter to test his skills against the best he could find.

That wand was nine and three quarter inches of Maple, containing a tail hair of Sphinx, and had been claimed on a memorable night in early February. Where 'Drágen' had slain a thirty year undefeated champion, one of Voldemort's greatest and most fondly remembered moments.

Nevertheless, the wand was still captured. It had not chosen him as his old Yew and Phoenix had, so many years before. The upshot being that his magic was not at its optimal, and would never be until he found a wand which suited his magic.

Over the previous months Voldemort had tried thousands, literally thousands of wands, in an attempt to find one which would chose him. Each and every one they'd attempted had failed, and the wandmaker Gregorovitch maintained that his case was unprecedented.

Voldemort had pressed him, and asked if there could be constructed a Custom Wand which would work. The elderly Master had shakenly asserted, that the best any custom wand could manage would be Familiarity ... which turned out to be the technical term for the adequate feeling he got from the Sphinx and Maple wand he was currently using.

This being the reason for which Voldemort was climbing this windswept mountainside all alone. He concluded that what was required, were the suitable components to create a powerful wand that would choose him, and as he already had a Focus or Wandcore in mind, all he needed was a casing which would function optimally.

And to get it to work as it should, Voldemort was applying the age old concept of Trials.

Entering a darkened cave of myth and legend, the Dark Lord sought his destiny.

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"Sevie me old mate, guess which emerald eyed favourite student of yours got an 'Outstanding' in his Potions O.W.L." Harry went on happily "I'll give you a clue, he got exactly the same score as one Lily Evens back when she was a fifth year."

"Potter I-" Snape began in barely restrained fury.

"Of course full credit goes to your teaching style Professor," he continued in the attempt to be as infuriating as possible "the calm and pleasant instruction really allows any student to reach his or her full potential."

The overt hatred being directed toward the dark haired sixteen year old should have been worrisome in the extreme, but was not the Hogwarts motto something about how much fun could come from poking a sleeping Dragon?

"Besides Potions is a doddle isn't it? It's just like cooking, and when in doubt add Eye of Newt." Harry asserted with wide eyed innocence. "Seriously, Eye of Newt is the answer to like everything ... with enough Newt Eyes a person could cure death itself!"

There was one class other than Arithmancy which Harry attended without fail, and would not ditch unless he had very good reasons to do so. And that class was Potions.

Potions was ever so much fun.

It took Professor Snape almost half the lesson to regain his composure and begin teaching again. Harry had been channelling his inner Dumbledore, pretending that the Professor was very young, and that he was the benign grandfatherly figure Snape had been missing his whole life. He'd been doing it consistently since half way through Fourth Year, with the goal being to cause a stroke before Graduation.

As the first day was a theory lesson the class were not actually brewing anything, and eventually he noticed that his friend was not really paying attention to the concepts she'd previously read about. Seeing Hermione drifting off as she thought back to the events

following last night's Feast, Harry began making wibbily flashback noises under his breath.

Hermione was nervously clutching the note she'd received with her meal. She needn't be nervous it was only Professor Dumbledore, but then again it wasn't. She's been asked to meet with Headmaster Dumbledore alone in his Office, and that somehow seemed far more daunting. Looking the stone Gargoyle in the face Hermione took a deep breath and put aside her foolishness.

"Acid Pops." She said, and the fractured guardian leaped aside, allowing her access to the animated staircase.

"Come in Ms. Granger." The Headmaster called an instant before she could knock on his door. They made some small talk about the Feast and so on for a while. "You appear anxious, would you care to tell me if there is anything I can do to put you at your ease?"

Sucking one of the Lemon Drops Harry insisted were cursed, or laced with LSD or something, she asked the thing which had been bugging her all evening. "Why did you hire Tam as Defence Professor?" It had been so unfair, the two had come to an agreement and now her girlfriend was going to make her life a living hell!

Dumbledore chuckled. "I assure you, Professor Riddle is more than qualified." He said unloading a full burst of his signature eye twinkling effect. "What amuses me is Voldemort applied for that position twice, and was turned down both times, first by my predecessor and years later by myself. I can only imagine Voldemort's reaction when he learns his other self succeeded where he failed."

Hermione signed but did not comment, spending some time scratching Fawkes behind the wing in the way he liked. "May I ask why you wished to speak with me this evening Professor."

"I have a proposition for you Ms. Granger." Dumbledore answered after a long thoughtful pause.

"My initial intension on Harry's release from Azkaban Prison, was to offer this to him following his Graduation from Hogwarts." The Headmaster admitted "However time and circumstance has forced

me to move up my plans." After a while she bade him to continue. "I wish you to consider accepting an Apprenticeship under me."

Hermione choked hearing this. Albus Dumbledore had never accepted an Apprentice, thought not because of any lack of willing candidates.

"I can see why you did not offer this to Harry." She said with wide eyes.

"Indeed." Dumbledore agreed. "It is doubtful that Harry would accept anyone in such a position of power over him. Nevertheless, you are by no means a second choice Ms. Granger."

"B-but. Why me?" Hermione asked lamely.

With a mysterious smile and a shaken head at the girl underestimating herself Dumbledore went on. "For one thing, you are one of the few I have met in all my years who possess a suitable temperament to learn some of the magic I could teach."

Hermione had not given the Headmaster an answer at the time. Even though she already knew how she was going to respond. Professor Snape asked her a question which necessitated detailed knowledge of both Astronomy and Herbology, and she answered absently before returning to her thoughts.

Harry noticed this, and plainly enjoyed the angered look which passed across Snape's face when she failed to get caught out. Answering the needlessly difficult question with ease and offering the man nothing save a dismissive hand gesture.

Harry spent the remainder of the lesson obviously ignoring the Professor, scheming to trick Luna into teaching him the Sticky Shield she refused to share until after the movie came out a couple years from now.

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"It is agreed." A booming voice of fire and menace echoed hollowly from the other side of a tear in the very fabric of creation.

If legend was to be believed the Old Ones found creatures on this plain of existence amusing, and in exchange for entertainment could be convinced to provide a great Boon. Assuming the reckless hero in question survived of course, the myths also warned that anyone foolish enough to try would certainly die.

"I am Lord Voldemort, send forth your challenges they mean less than nothing to me!" He intoned. Voldemort was actually enjoying this. There would be three tasks of escalating difficulty, and once he crushed all opposition, a prize of great worth.

He lived for moments like this.

Stone groaned against stone as a colossal doorway split open, fifty paces high, midnight black as pitch was all that could be seen. Voldemort stepped through without flinching, strode to the centre of an arena, and stood in silence as the gateway slammed shut.

There was a long moment where nothing happened, but after a time a lizard easily forty feet long with brown scales and thick black ridges, fell from the ceiling to land at Voldemort's feet with a shuddering crash. 'I am to slay a Norwegian Ridgeback? Pathetic.'

He raised his Maple and Sphinx wand and unleashed a potent band of serrated energy at the Dragon, but was shocked to find his magic had been bound. Voldemort took a heavy swipe from the reptile and was slammed thirty feet into the air, connecting painfully with the far wall.

'Ah, things have become far more interesting all of a sudden.' He thought in approval.

Leaping to his feet and taking a wash of dragonfire, Voldemort hopped into a strafing run alongside the enormous creature. Pausing, ducking, and even back flipping over the Ridgeback's vicious talons, the Dark Lord haltingly closed on his challenger.

Even his wandless abilities had been bound, so Voldemort had decided on a straightforward solution. He ploughed his clenched fist deep into the Dragon's vulnerable eye, tearing the lightly armoured eyelid and scooping out as much of the glutinous flesh as he could manage. The Ridgeback went wild of course, thrashing and lashing

out in pain, but the Dark Lord held on even as the beast took to the air.

Working on the underside of the animal's neck he was eventually sideswiped with a claw and plummeted sixty feet to the ground, torched the whole way by yet another breath of dragonfire.

The battle lasted easily a quarter of an hour, but as was inevitable, the gigantic reptile lay unmoving at Lord Voldemort's feet. Neck shattered, dead on the floor.

Once again stone groaned against stone and the colossal doorway split open. "You are the first in many centuries to pass the opening task." The otherworldly voice boomed, and Voldemort felt his magic re-engage. "Make it out of this room to meet your final challenge."

Hundreds upon hundreds of humanoid creatures coalesced out of nowhere, each with a jackal-like skull overtopping Voldemort's seven foot frame by a head. Easing his Maple wand from its holster and bowing to the oncoming army, Voldemort began to cast.

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"You're better at pissing off Snape than James and I ever were!" Padfoot informed later that evening. "It really is a beautiful thing to watch Mr. Babbity."

"Sirius, my Marauder name is not going to be Mr. Babbity no matter how many times you say it." Harry complained.

"Mr. Bugs?"

"Better, but still no." He said, walking toward the Owlery. "Has Luna finished setting up the practice Array?"

"Yeah, it's in some unused section of the Castle." Sirius told him. "The thing is huge, do you really think you can figure it out in only two months?"

"I'd better. I'm the only one who can do it, and we don't want to wait another whole year before trying it." They two former convicts arrived at their destination and Harry set about visiting with his Owl for a while. After feeding her one of the deluxe, high quality Owl

Treats and watching her stumble about trying to throw off the effects of Owl catnip, he spoke. "Do you know what I want you to do Hedwig?"

She nodded a touch blearily.

"We're voting Yes on the second motion okay. So that's a Yay, got it?" She bobbed her head and nipped him affectionately, while Harry made sure the tiny Owl Beard was firmly attached to his Familiar.

The two watched as Hedwig winged her way out of the Castle and toward the Wizengamot meeting Harry didn't feel like attending.

"Time to practice?" Sirius asked. "I wouldn't mind seeing Lils again, and Luna did say if you get it wrong..."

"...I'll die horribly." Harry finished. "Yeah, I remember."

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Face heavily scarred and large chunk of ear missing on his left side, Voldemort stood in the room alone and victorious. He set about constructing a metallic leg which shimmered with a coppery green hue. Bodies lay everywhere, slumped over one another or in pieces, and some even imbedded into the walls.

That had been fun.

Stretching high and testing his new left leg, Voldemort made sure that his body was functioning optimally, despite any cosmetic damage. He gave up healing the slash which nearly took his eye and simply cauterised it, as he swept threateningly from the room.

While it was the same door he'd entered, the room he came to was clearly not the entranceway, nor the path back to the cave. The groaning stone marked the gateway's sealing and Voldemort came face to face by a large, ornate mirror. Full length and featuring his own reflection.

It took less than an instant to realise this was not his reflection however. The figure looking back at him was uninjured and fresh, without scars and still in possession of all its limbs. Unsurprisingly

the mirror form Dark Lord stepped from the glass, and the two figures locked malevolent scarlet gazes.

As he had before, he did again, and the two combatants bowed.

Voldemort noticed the pale length of his old Yew wand in the grip of this most dangerous foe, but the unleashed barrage of magic his opponent set free at that moment, distracted him from musing further on the fact.

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Massaging her jaw and trying to work out the kinks in her neck and shoulders, Hermione stumbled her way toward the Seventh Floor. She was quite certain there were rules which prevented Professors from making their students do things like that during Detentions. There had to be! It was just wrong, an abuse of power. That's what it was.

Not that it wasn't fun at times...

Damn it!

That girl was ruining her.

She spoke the password, passed the Gargoyle, and made her way up the Animated staircase. When Hermione was seated across from the Headmaster she began her well rehearsed complaint about the evil Defence Professor.

"I would like to become your Apprentice Professor Dumbledore." She said.

"What? That isn't what I intended to say at all!" Hermione screamed in her head.

"Outstanding." Dumbledore responded with a wide smile. "However if you are to be my Apprentice I must insist you call me Albus as tradition dictates."

"Of course ...Albus." She finished tentatively.

'What the hell's going on?' Hermione racked her brain. 'Why can't I object to... oh! That sneaky bint.'

"While there are many things I wish to share with you Hemione, I believe in the current climate, a more combative approach to magic should be our focus." Albus went on, as he proceeded to discuss some of the more logistical aspects of her instruction, while she was still a more or less normal student of Hogwarts.

'Tam told me I'd neglected to sign my class work' Hermione concluded to herself. 'She must have put a glamour on a Secrecy Scroll. That's why I can't talk about what happened in the Detention! Oh, I am so going to make her pay.'

After an hour's discussion with the Headmaster, Hermione left. They would meet up for two hours each evening save Sundays, and Albus would teach her everything she could learn. They'd signed the Apprenticeship agreement using a nasty Blood Quill, and the contract would no doubt be announced in the Prophet by tomorrow morning.

It was a momentous day, but Hermione's thoughts were solely directed toward revenge.

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Voldemort slumped to the ground.

That had been far from easy, he decided. Fun, but far from easy.

The ever victorious Dark Lord set about crafting a metallic left arm of coppery green, then a right foot of using the same process. He healed, closed, and cauterised all his other wounds, while idly resolving not to get hit with Demon's Light again anytime soon.

When finished he walked over to the mirror, now reflecting his own image, and took in the disfiguring blemishes of his face and body. He liked them strangely enough, they had been well earned this day, and Voldemort hoped he wouldn't have to go through another Rebirthing Ritual for a while.

"Champion, you have completed the Triad." The hollow voice of fire and menace declared. "What Boon do you request?"

"There was never any doubt of my triumph, for I am Lord Voldemort!" The Dark Lord stated grandly "You know the reason I am here, and what I require of you."

The mirror rippled and reviled the branch he sought. Plunging his hand through the reflection and grasping his prize, Voldemort admired the trophy as he stalked through the room's single door.

When he reached the mouth of the cave the Dark Lord found it to be midday and winced at the bright light. One of the minor annoyances which came with the enhanced body he was using, was that his eyes were painfully sensitive to intense illumination. It caused twinges he could easily deal with, and was not the kind of thing he would admit to any of his minions, so he usually ignored it. Nevertheless the irritation did not fit well amid today's triumphant disposition.

With a casual swish of his Sphinx wand, Voldemort conjured a pair of Shades he vaguely recalled seeing on a Troll, from the cover of one of his Death Eaters' magazines.

Sunglasses in place on the ridge of his noseless face, Lord Voldemort made his way down the mountainside, and back to civilisation.

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It was Halloween and Voldemort was once again atop his Obsidian Throne. Helga and Rowena had come to a startling conclusion when commanded to research the method by which the boy had destroyed his City. It had not been magic at all, but those terrifying weapons the Muggles foolishly created, in an effort to end the Mundane side of the war against Grindelwald and his Allies.

The two Founders had clearly been as appalled as Voldemort when sharing this news in private. That any Magical would commit such a crime was abhorrent in the extreme, and simply confirmed in their minds that conquering such fools was the correct course of action.

Although Voldemort did idly wonder whether his Immortality would have survived, had he been in the City at the time of detonation ... He probably would given that his Shade form was incorporeal,

nevertheless it was not be something he would seek to confirm in the near future. Perhaps he could have one of his Death Eaters create a Horcrux at some point, and he would test it.

The Wandmaker was escorted into the room shaking Voldemort from his thoughts. If the man had completed his work on this day, Halloween, the day of such cosmic significance, then things could only bode well for his plan.

"You have accomplished your task Master Gregorovitch?" Voldemort hissed.

"Yes My Lord." The old man confirmed. He was visibly excited, eyes alight with exultant success. "I have been crafting wands for ten decades. I can say without doubt this is by far the greatest I have ever, and likely will ever create." Greorovich snapped open a finely crafted wandcase, and there for all to see was a fifteen inch stick of creamy white wood resting on a bed of black satin. "This is a masterwork, to make any masterpiece jealous."

Voldemort came down from his Obsidian Throne and the pale digits of his right hand hovered above the proffered wand in hesitation. This was it, if this wand did not choose him, Voldemort knew the only avenue remaining to him was to claw back his Yew wand from the waif's cold dead fingers. Something he would do regardless of course, but for now this was his last chance.

Voldemort took the wand. He felt a sudden warmth in his fingers. He raised the wand above his head, brought it swishing down through the still air and a stream of green and silver sparks shot from the end like a firework, pulsing again and again with a long forgotten pull last felt at age eleven, throwing dancing spots of light on to the walls.

Blissful exultation lasted a long moment, and when he returned to the room Voldemort noticed the Wandmaker desperate to ask some questions.

"You wish to identify the components which I charged you to use." He stated to the man in sibilant tones.

"The heart you gave me was unusual I admit." Gregorovitch said "Yet I discovered it to be human, albeit one half again normal size."

"Correct Master Gregorovitch. It was carved from my own corpse for you to use." Voldemort agreed.

"Yes, your own ... I see ... fascinating." The man stared into the distance clearly lost in thought. "Conversely the wood you gave me. I have never in all my days seen the like..." He trailed off, hoping the Dark Lord would humour him.

Smiling a sinister smile Voldemort shared his knowledge with the man who had done such admirable work.

"Yggdrasill and Wizard Heartstring, Fifteen Inches."

The man choked. To have come across a wand quality branch of the world tree itself...

"My Lord to stand in your way would take the Wand of Destiny, an artefact I have held in my own hands, and even then..."

"Yes?"

"Any wand, even one of legend like this," Gregorovitch gestured to his creation "any wand can be beaten."

Pale wand in hand the magic leapt from Voldemort's fingertips, it was time to begin moving once again.

The declaration was met by an almighty thunderclap.

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The last two months had sped past at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry had been spending all of his free time practising the Array in the room they had commandeered, and a series of malicious, spiteful pranks were directed at the Defence Professor but nobody could figure out who was behind them.

Hermione had changed a little also. She seemed more focused, and her hair always had this wavy quality to it which garnered a number of jealous looks from the Castle's random assortment of girls. News of her Apprenticeship with the world renowned Albus Dumbledore had sent shockwaves throughout the Wizarding World, most notably

in Britain because her Muggleborn status seemed to offend a certain cross section of society and their delicate sensibilities.

Everyone had been so busy that it was a surprise Voldemort, the Death Eaters, and the War was taking up barely any of their time. The Dark Lord's forces seemed content to take things easily after their last routing, and the loss of their main base. Laying low and licking their wounds, that was how the Prophet was playing it at least. Even if Harry, Tam, and Dumbledore all agreed the quiet was a little ominous.

So now the group found themselves back where it all began, Godric's Hollow, precisely fifteen years to the day since the Dark Lord had been defeated for the first time.

There was a thunderstorm.

Harry decided this was a good thing. He'd have to ask at some point whether what they were doing caused the thunderstorm, magic itself knew a thunderstorm was appropriate, or if there being a thunderstorm in progress was merely a coincidence.

The Shroud, the Stone, the Wand.

Brother cores of Phoenix Feather, and an imposing black cube six feet on each edge.

A time to live and a time to die.

Today was All Hallows' Eve.

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Lens of Sanity

Monsieur Auctor's surviving a Nuclear Strike explanation was used in text, it was more detailed than what I was going to write.

While I gave Voldemort a MarySue Wand, it isn't more powerful than the Elder Wand, it just has the capacity to become like it ...(SimilarToAllWands)... with enough XP.

Most people seem annoyed Canon!Harry isn't very clever or powerful. Conversely I find weak, incapable Voldemorts irritating. Therefore the Dark Lord in this story can kill a Ridgeback with his bare hands, how badass was THAT!

Chapter Twenty Three: Necromancy for Fun and Profit

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Bellatrix padded into the commandeered section of Hogwarts which contained Yellow's practice Array. Ears pointed forwards she made her way toward where Harry was resting, and settled her head in his lap. He began stroking her behind the ears in the way she liked, and Bella let out a contented growl-like purr. Unfortunately tigers cannot actually purr properly like their smaller feline cousins, but she made her best effort.

Besides it felt really good.

Harry had been practicing hard over the last two months in his attempt to Heal Lily Potter's death, and Bellatrix had no doubt all that hard work would bear fruit by tomorrow evening. It was just a shame she hadn't been able to help very much. She'd been feeling weird and nauseous at the oddest times, even though all the diagnostics she'd run on herself had told her she was in the prime of health.

"-f you didn't spend all your free time sleeping with tramps you might know what I'm talking about." Hermione attested with exasperation.

Harry cocked an eyebrow at her. "You know I've only actually had sex with four different women, right Hermione?"

"What? Don't be ridiculous, I've seen loads of different girls coming and going from your rooms at the most peculiar times." The brunette objected.

"In truth it is five not four Harry." Yellow informed him.

"Huh?" He said in confusion. "I've never so much as kissed Fleur Delacour you know."

"I know, and you never got further than over the covers action with Daphne Greengrass before you two broke up."

"What are you two saying?" Hermione asked. "What about all those girls I've seen you with Harry?"

"It's always Luna, she uses Polyjuice all the time." Harry's eyes narrowed in suspicion. "I have actually slept with Trace, right Luna? ... I wouldn't put it past you to spend the whole day impersonating her just to mess with me."

When Yellow just smiled mysteriously, Harry looked to conclude he was simply being paranoid. If that were the case she'd have followed up with some form of unnerving comment or other.

"Anyway, you were saying it was five not four. Who am I missing?" The raven haired man asked.

"Well Tracy and I are two." Harry nodded. "Then there was the whole incident with Cho Chang and the Sonorus you put on the Prefects' Bathroom, which she totally didn't appreciate."

He smiled in remembrance, who knew the Chinese Seeker was so shy about stuff like that? "And Bella dear when she attacked me that one time after I survived my death, makes four."

Bellatrix purple catlike eyes widened in sudden realisation.

"So who is the mysterious fifth girl then?" Hermione asked, for once acting the gossipy teenager.

Yellow's mischievous smile obviously started worrying Harry a little. As he turned and pinned her with a very direct green eyed stare she answered in an offhand way. "Well you remember the second time I Polyjuiced into looking like Pansy Parkinson..."

"...yeah." He confirmed warily.

"It's just that she'd made a mean spirited comment at my expense..." the blonde said "...so I decided to lace her with an Attraction Potion and point her at your room."

"..." Harry responded.

"You have a thing for Parkinson Harry?" Hermione asked sweetly.

"Er-, well ... it's just that she's such a terrible person, that you can do all kinds of awful, unforgivable things to her..." he began "...and you don't feel the least bit bad about it afterwards."

The group were all quiet for the longest time. "Harry, do you mind if I..."

"What?" He asked when she gave him a meaningful look. "Oh ...yes yes, why not."

Watching the blonde leave, Hermione asked "Has she just gone to get hair from..."

"I think so." Harry confirmed.

It wasn't much longer before Harry was back to preparing for tomorrow's Halloween showdown, leaving Bella lounging alone in the room to watch. So she got up and padded out, returning to her own quarters. When she got there she conducted a well remembered spell and noticed the light glow, a clean blue.

"Huh." She said aloud in her empty room. "Blue."

Bellatrix had never seen blue before, in all the times she'd performed that spell. Blue was good, better than green. It was. Wasn't it?

She thought for a long while. Yes, blue was good, only complicated. Bella got up and headed for the nearest floo, and Aunt Walburga's old house at Grimmauld Place. She strolled confidently past a number of nervous members of the Weasel family and into the Black Library.

Twenty minutes searching found the book she was looking for, then it was back to Hogwarts, and a further hour's hunting before her target was chained to a wall. Bella double checked the book's incantation and wandmotion a final time before completing the process.

Then she checked herself again; green.

Then she checked her target; blue.

Excellent.

She performed a Memory Charm and then lay in a few subtle commands and compulsions, before going back to padding the Halls of the Castle searching for Harry again. It was almost Dinner, and Harry never ate enough unless she was there.

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Harry Potter woke on the morning of October the Thirty First 1996, with a smooth mass of straight dark hair tickling his nose. He cracked open his eyes and felt a body shift next to him, turning his head slightly he got a view of high cheekbones and blonde hair out the corner of his eye.

'Uh-oh.' He thought 'What the hell happened last night?' A surprisingly firm arse wiggled itself closer to his front and he winced. 'You did not just knowingly sleep with Pansy Parkinson Harry! This is all a dream, a horrible-horrible dream.'

'Okay Harry recap. What was the last thing you remember?'

Harry was finishing up his last evening of practice, Bella had brought him something to eat earlier and then vanished as she did sometimes. Luna had left ages ago around the same time as Hermione went for yet another of her many, many detentions, and Harry was giving the Practice Array a final onceover before bed.

Luna strode in as if she owned the place, full Slytherin robes, mimicking the sixth year prefect's mannerisms flawlessly, as she was so adept at doing when using Polyjuice. He'd yanked her hair back forcefully, without preamble, and went from there.

Harry would never forget that conversation a few years ago, where Luna had informed him different bodies reacted, enjoyed, and disliked various sensations dissimilarly. And that wearing other forms allowed her to enjoy diverse experiences she would not, under normal circumstances, find the least bit pleasant. Harry's motivation being that a different girl was a different girl, which worked in line with this attitude quite nicely. Although Luna never did go Fleur Delacour on him, for reasons which he was strangely thankful.

When the slender Slytherin had melted into him, Harry noticed a second dark haired Slytherin watching him from the doorway in amusement.

"Look Potter, I don't like you." The Pansy in his arms told him "But what happened last year was easily the best sex I've ever had!"

"She wanted to play," the Pansy at the door replied to his questioning look "who was I to say no?"

"I didn't think you were into ménages Luna?" Harry asked to the door, as the other girl basically started molesting him.

"I'm not. But I am interested in how far you're liable to take things when you know it's the real Parkinson."

He shook his head "You are one twisted fuck, I'll give you that." Harry commented in approval.

Things had really gone quite off the rails after that, he remembered ambivalently. Once again he noted Luna's Polyjuice had worn off and that her strategically placed hands were definitely not helping matters any.

'You are so going to hell Harry!' He commented to himself as he fully returned to the present.

"Holding me a spear point Potter?" the bitch in front of him commented acidly "So Gryffindor of you."

'Yep, hell it is. Definitely hell!'

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There was something indecent about how much Luna was enjoying herself when they went to get breakfast a few hours later, and Parkinson hobbled to the Hospital Wing leaning heavily against walls the whole way. The Slytherin had been muttering something about being unable to feel her feet on the way out.

"Explain it to me again!" Tam commanded the two as they shakily took their seats at the Hufflepuff table.

"Oh, explain what?" Harry asked tenderly from his position across from her and Hermione.

"The Runic Array," Tam insisted "and how you think it could possibly revive someone who has been dead for a decade and a half."

"Lily killed Voldemort back in '81 correct?" Luna asked.

"Right." Hermione said.

"And as far as we can tell, the method of Dark Lord dispatching she utilised, was a human sacrifice Ritual twisted from some Dark Arts tome Lily had been researching." The blonde went on, drinking deeply from her large glass of orange juice.

Hermione took up the explanation. "From what has been said before, you believe that Voldemort's Horcruxes being active, prevented her from really dying." The brunette looked confused. "Explain that part again!"

"Having a Horcrux technically kept Voldemort alive." Harry put in, stirring a bowl of incredibly thick black coffee. "My mother's forfeit was her life, in an 'I die' for a 'you die' ritualistic trade-off. Following?"

"Barely." Tam muttered. "Go on."

"Meaning; Lily did not get any benefit from her Ritual..." Luna said slowly "...And should therefore still technically be alive also."

"This is Edge Magic by the way. Untested, at the boundaries of what we know and believe to be possible." Harry put in, directing it toward the children patronisingly. "As long as there is still one person who has been touched by the Sacrifice, Lily should be anchored to life."

"The Runic Array," Luna said, ignoring him "the one Harry shagged out of me back when I was fourteen remember?" They all nodded "Its function turned out to untangle those two competing Rituals, removing the Blood Protection Guardian running through the defended person's veins. Thereby resurrecting the person who Ceremonially allowed themselves to be murdered."

"In this case my mother, Lily Potter." Harry finished triumphantly.

"And it's not going to work" the blonde attested "Harry is obviously going to die horribly in the attempt."

Hermione and Tam nodded at this self evident fact. As did Harry before he stopped to think through her words.

"Shut up Luna!"

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Petunia was in her room late afternoon on the day these witches and wizards had been waiting for. They had been leaving her alone for the most part, meals were delivered by strange little mannequin creatures, and she was occasionally visited by one person or another.

Everyone called her Petunia Evans here, and many of them had been visibly surprised she could see the ghosts as clear as day, floating though this bizarre Castle School. This place had cost Petunia her sister. It had been gradual of course, no single incident could she point to and say 'that was it, this was the day my sister and I drifted apart forever.'

She'd been a little surprised when invited to Lily's wedding, and had attended despite their increasingly rocky relationship. The service had been... Petunia let out a long sigh ...filled with freaks, and lots of equally freakish behaviour. However their parents had both been killed not too long beforehand, and so she'd been present at the service with her husband...

God but Petunia hated magic!

Her husband and son had been murdered by magic, and worse, from comments made Petunia wasn't certain the quote, unquote bad Magicals were the ones who were ultimately to blame. Nevertheless, the boy claimed her blood could be used to cure her estranged sibling, and that death was not necessarily as permanent for witches as it was for other woman.

Dumbledore had even intimated that Harry spent a few months earlier that year dead, and had somehow gotten over it!

So Petunia was willing to sit here, in her not cell. Eating meals, and awaiting the day she could be useful. Working through this trashy novel, which was by far the trashiest thing she'd ever read. It was even worse than the first book, if that was even possible.

'Jousting with the Jabberwock: by Harry Potter and Rita Skeeter'

My Gods in Heaven! How anyone, even people who believed in magic, could possibly accept anything which was written here, she'd never know. Petunia wasn't even completely sure what a Spear Harem was! Let alone why the Hermione heroine was in possession of one.

And that scene where His Grace Harry Potter, was forced to team up with Gingerbeard. In order for the two to take on the Legion of the Sensual Serpent... That, that-, it had more plot holes than it had plot!

Petunia put down the recently completed book when the young woman came to fetch her. Apparently they were setting up soon, and she needed to get ready.

When the girl told her, her name was Hermione, Petunia almost changed her mind.

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This was it, their one shot at getting it to work.

Well it was only their sole chance due to the fact that if it didn't work, or Harry made a single mistake, there would be an appreciably large explosion. Worse was the fact that the longer the process went on, the more power would be built up. So if a mistake was made toward the end of the process, the appreciably large explosion may ...it was conceivably possible, it might perhaps... level most of Southern England.

That probably wouldn't happen though, so no worries.

The Runic Array worked off the number six, the figure most significant when doing things like Daemon Raisings and so on. And in this case, a little bit of amateur Necromancy, which also worked off the number six. As could be shown by the large Hexagram

sketched out back of Dumbledore Cottage, Godric's Hollow; the original site of Lily Potter's death.

The Hexagram was drawn using ground up Virgin Bone, which was one of those things that sounded a lot worse than it really was when it's said out loud. There had been a bit of a conversation a month ago with Hermione when she'd protested, and Bellatrix offer to go collect it hadn't really helped.

This was mostly due to Bella's assertion that she wouldn't get it all from the same Primary School. Nor had Harry's look of fondness helped, when she'd irritably commented on how it wasn't the kind of mistake a person made twice.

At the centre of the Hexagram was an imposing cube of black granite, impeccably carved with six hundred and sixty six Runes on the outside, and six hundred and sixty six Runes on the inside.

This was one of the major problems which had needed to be addressed. The Accelerating Rune Flow needed to have each Rune activated at precisely six second intervals, from inside the cube. Unfortunately, any magic performed inside would disrupt the powering surge of magic which would be delivered from outside the Array.

So it was lucky that one of the people most enthusiastic in his support of this endeavour, happened to be Master of the mostly mythological Cloak of Invisibility. An artefact which, if legend spoke true, made the wearer not just Invisible, but fully and completely concealed from all detection.

Harry was currently inside the Array, with a large number of Sticky Charms cast on the inside of the Cloak, concealing his magical signature and preventing any excess magic from bleeding out into the surrounding air.

He was sweating pretty heavily because there were one hundred and eleven different runes on each surface; North, South, East, West, Ceiling, and Floor. And he had to activate one of them every six seconds in an excruciatingly precise order, which necessitated a lot of running around frantically to opposite sides of the Cube. And even more fun to be had almost missing the Click Track, Luna had running on the outside so as not to miss a beat.

Practicing to ensure he got the order of activation spot on, was what Harry had been obsessively working on over the past two months.

Sounds easy?

It gets worse.

There was a very finicky type of magic which needed to be fed into the Master Rune Cluster, carved onto the outside of the Array. Although luckily enough, one of Harry's close friends was in possession of a Stone whose primary function was involved in Necromantic Arts such as Inferi creation.

The Resurrection Stone present in Tam's family Ring was one of those mostly mythological artefacts like the Cloak, and the redhead just happened to also be the Stone's true Master. And luckily enough, any magic channelled through it, was just the type needed to activate that finicky Master Rune Cluster they'd been having so much trouble with.

Sounds doable?

It gets even worse.

The quantity of magic of such rarefied type which needed to be fed into the Runic Array was tremendous, and needed to all be produced by a single individual. Unfortunately there were no individuals currently alive who could conceivably channel enough magic for the sixty six minutes thirty six seconds required, without dying of magical exhaustion.

Yet in another totally unforeseen turn of events, another of Harry's close friends was Master of yet another mostly mythological artefact, which may well allow a single person to channel enough magic into Tam's Stone. Albus had, many years ago, won the allegiance of the much sought after Wand of Destiny. Meaning that in truth, Albus may be capable of providing the magic necessary to pull this whole thing off successfully.

This huge well of energy which would be stored over the sixty six point six minutes, was the cause of the moderately worrisome possibility of a Southern England levelling explosion.

So the magic from Albus Dumbledore was channelled through the Deathstick and into the Resurrection Stone.

Tamsyn Riddle then took the altered magic type, and channelled it through her Phoenix Wand into the Master Rune Cluster on the outside of the Array.

Petunia Evans was hogtied in the centre of the Cube, and dripping a single drop of her valuable blood once every six seconds, onto the Rune which would be activated last.

And Harry Potter, covered by the Cloak of Invisibility, was running around inside the same Cube, activating each of the six hundred and sixty six Runes. He was doing so once every six seconds, coinciding with each blood drop, and in an insanely specific order, using a wand which was brother to the one on the outside.

He'd activated six hundred and sixty five.

Sweat pouring off him and shaking from fatigue, Harry dropped to his knees, and tiredly touched the tip of his Phoenix Wand to the final, blood splattered 'Öpalan' Rune.

At the same instant a thunderbolt struck the black granite cube, and all in attendance were bathed in a thick green mist.

Something had gone wrong.

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Harry got too his feet a little dazed. He was exhausted. Not the kind of exhaustion one got from heavy exertion, or even the kind familiar to all Magicals when they'd channelled too much magic in a single sitting. No, it was the form which creeps up on a person when they've been concentrating exclusively on one task for an extended period of time.

There was a thick soup hanging in the air, Killing Curse Green. It made seeing far difficult, and moving fluidly harder. While it was dispersing around Harry, it seemed to him as though it was locking everyone else in place, like flies in sap.

"Harry behind you!" Came Luna's warning, muted behind the viscous mist. She'd seen the disturbance his Cloak was making, as the location an attack was aimed at. He dodge rolled instinctively so a wisp of something sharp ruffled his Cloak instead of taking his neck. Bringing Eleven Inches of Holly to bear Harry heard a second warning. "You can't do magic, the Rune Wells are still glowing!"

'Bloody brilliant!' Harry declared, diving out the way of a second strike.

For the first time he got a full view of whatever monster was threatening him; five foot six and slim, with poisonous jade hair and hate filled eyes burning with an unholy orange light. And perhaps more urgent, the razor sharp scimitar held competently in the abomination's right hand.

Swish!

"Okay, fuck this" Harry shouted, booting the thing that was not his mother hard in the face. Magic muted beneath his Hallow, the impressive swirl of wind and fire was lost on those watching, but once drawn the Vorpall Sword was brought down with a defensive clash of metal against 'metal.'

The creature of evil and hatred hissed at him, and spoke in a tongue which pained the ears to hear.

"Bring it bitch!"

A two handed grip span his enormous blade and the two traded blows, and parries. The abomination, though slight of build was stronger than it should have been, and the two battled in earnest.

Luna's mind span through possibilities, and eventualities, she noticed the unconscious Petunia Evans lying still alive, if covered in her own blood, and the truth lanced through the layers of incomprehension. "Harry, you need to kill in it six hundred and sixty six seconds!"

Bounding away with a deep slice to the thigh, Harry responded with a dignified. "Thank you so fucking much! Care to offer any advice?"

"Sharp bit goes into your enemy." Tam said, blasé in the face of the current happenings. This type of magic was Chaotic in nature. Just because the group had believed the six hundred and sixty six seconds after completion would be a slow build, calm before the storm, didn't mean it necessarily was.

The hood of his Cloak fell down and Harry offered a two fingered salute to his irritating, totally unhelpful brother.

The Demonic Lily hissed again, and Harry did a low slash to her legs which was leaped, an upwards diagonal that was parried, and a horizontal slash with all his might which severed the abomination's torso from its legs.

"Wey hey! Top of the food chain!" Harry commented, lifting his Vorpal Sword overhead in a victory pose, and turning to his friends.

They looked past him concerned.

When he turned back, the two chunks were melting, and coalescing into two Demonic Lily's.

"Great, just great!" He said hefting his sword again. "How long do I have left?"

"Erm-, about three hundred seconds!" Luna replied.

Swish!

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"Duck!" Hermione, Luna, Bella, Sirius, Tam, and Albus all screamed from their bound position as spectators.

Harry had gotten the first Lily, but the second one had been lining up its shot. He dove behind his broad blade and the flaming crossbow bolt twanged off the sword without causing a scratch. 'Fantastic, bloody fantastic. The thing has a crossbow now!'

Harry hefted his weapon and threw it end over end toward his adversary, imbedding the long sharp point directly into its chest.

He scampered over, boot on its neck, and pulled the blade free. Right as the three Lily chunks coalesced into three, shiny new Demonic Lily's.

"How long?"

"About two minutes. Maybe a few seconds more." Luna called.

'Okay, three on one, and in less than half the time it took me to take two.' Harry considered 'Wait! One plus two, plus three, is six ... if I get these three it should be over. Right?'

Broad blade takes a crossbow bolt, parry the sharp edge of number three's glaive, sidestep scimitar's thrust.

'Okay Harry, you're inside her guard.'

Slash down, take wrist off the glaive wielder, head butt little-miss scimitar. Take a black fire crossbow bolt in the shoulder, not good.

Clumsily sideswipe Mrs. Oops-where's-my-hand, and dodge roll an overhand scimitar attack.

Swish!

"Twenty seconds at most Harry!" Luna informed helpfully. It wasn't like he was doing anything at all strenuous here!

He couldn't try to heal or cauterise his wounds because he couldn't risk using magic. Upshot, he was limping, and wielding his Vorpall Sword with only one hand.

"Fuck it!" He shouted.

Harry then began swinging, slashing, jumping, dodging and rolling, without plan or consideration. Letting his Animagus powers of randomness be his guide. The handless heroine went down within the first five seconds, and he'd bisected the crossbow cutie as soon as he'd gotten close.

"Time's up Harry!" the blonde screeched, at the instant the scimitar had flown from the last enemy's grip.

"Off with her head."

Swish!

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"Necromancy is hard." Harry whined as a typical wind began howling impressively. He sheathed his Vorpall Blade into the dirt, collapsed to the ground, and leaned his back up against its vertical surface.

The green misty-soup loosened with a cool swirly effect which Harry ignored, and his friends moved closer. Tam may well have backlit herself against one of the many lightning bolts and cackled 'Ultimate Power!' in an overly cheesy way, but if she did Hermione must have slapped her on the back of the head because she'd stopped abruptly.

Albus went and made sure Petunia was still alive. He presumably conducted some diagnostics and Healing, as well as forced a Blood Replenisher down her throat. Luna was waving her hands around inspecting her Array, and seemed happy with the results because she came over and flopped down next to Harry and Bellatrix.

"Well?" Sirius asked.

"How the hell am I supposed to know Padfoot? I have no idea what I'm doing either." Harry complained tiredly as Bella healed his cuts and scrapes.

A little over eleven minutes later the chunks of Demonic Lily's all melted and flowed to a single location. There were some more dramatic lights and cool sound effects, but Harry just found the whole thing annoying in a 'get on with it' kind of way.

Then standing there naked as the day she was born was a twenty one year old woman. She had very familiar green eyes, and a silky stream of auburn hair. Harry raked his eyes across the well defined curves and smooth looking expanse of bare skin, down toward-

"Harry that's your mother!" Hermione yelled, cuffing him on hard on the ear.

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It had been a week since Halloween and Harry was kicking back at Number Twelve, waiting for the Order of the Phoenix meeting to begin. He'd been jinxed pretty thoroughly attempting to replace that prick Mad-Eye's wooden leg with a transfigured rubber chicken, and had since decided to just wait quietly until the swelling went down.

It hadn't really been the storybook mother-son reunion everybody kind of assumed it would be. And worse was that every man, woman, man trapped in a woman's body, and dog-man, had universally agreed that each and every one of those heartwarming fairytale moments were ruined by Harry himself.

They'd unanimously concurred it was Harry's fault. And each time the two were about to have some kind of big emotional connection, he'd do something to weird out the whole situation, thereby spoiling everything.

First things first; one of the opening questions an orphan asks his recently revived mother, apparently shouldn't be whether or not she liked his boots. Second thing he'd learned was that when a newly resurrected maternal figure walked into a room which contained her, now fully grown son, going at it hammer and tongs with one of his friends under Polyjuice...

... and that said Polyjuice was charged with the previously mentioned maternal figure's hair. It would cause a situation which could be considered quite ...awkward.

Yeah.

The excuse that he had a thing for redheads hadn't really gone down too well either.

The third thing Harry had learned was that his mother was quite the emotional type, and found the "recent" death of her husband the kind of thing which left her a little mopey. That was one of the things Hermione was for; dealing with the emotional stuff. So Harry found himself hiding from his mother and her little whiny episodes, regardless of Hermione's regular chastisement of those actions.

Now they were around the meeting table, Sirius, Hermione, a large assortment of the Weasley family. Mad-Eye was trading hate filled

looks between Snape and Harry, while Harry was half flirting half teasing Tonks from his seat at her right. The older members of the Order were scattered around with some leaning up against the wall, and finally Albus was at the head of the table getting the meeting underway.

"...would like to re-introduce to you all; Lily Potter." The old man said grandly to a round of applause, and a slightly blushing young woman.

There were some words shared, and a few small conversations broke out thanks to this happy announcement. After a couple of minutes Tam came striding in.

"I have some news..." The redhead began, but paused at the sudden shocked looks being directed at her, and the awareness that she was unexpectedly the sole centre of attention. "...what?"

Tams eyes found Harry, and her brother gestured with one hand from eyes to waist and back again. The redhead looked down at her hands and body, and returned to Harry in confusion.

Realisation dawned.

"I'm not wearing my glamour am I?" Tam stated. It wasn't really a question.

"G-Ginny?" Mrs. Weasley asked with a heartbreaking level of hope.

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Harry's eyes cracked open and he found himself standing stark bollock naked, up to his knees in a large cauldron, and with a fair sized crowd looking at him...

...Erm, again.

"Bollocks!" He stated, absently noting that the potion really did taste of Hot Sauce. "Since when has Molly Weasley been that good with a wand?"

"Yeah..." Tam agreed. "She apologised for killing you by the way."

"Oh. Okay, that was nice of her." Harry said, glancing around the clearing and noticing Fleur wasn't present. "What day is it?"

"January 31st, exactly half a year before your birthday."

"My Unbirthday? Cool." Harry declared happily. "Have I missed anything important?"

"Yes Harry." Dumbledore put in, visibly forcing himself to look at Harry in the eyes. The guy really needed to get laid. "The war has taken several turns for the worse and-"

Harry noticed Lily had tears of relief running down her cheeks-, 'Mum, not Lily. Mum damn it!' He almost let out a frustrated sigh at the thought, but was interrupted by Bellatrix latching onto him. "Albus... Are our looming problems time dependent, or can they wait one more day?"

"They can wait." Luna put in helpfully.

Bella smiled and squeezed, then two vanished with a loud crack of Apparition.

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Lens of Sanity

Mr. crazyjim87 asked for something way back in ChapNine, and I finally got to it! ... The comment about Pansy being such a terrible person you don't feel the least bit bad about doing unforgivable stuff too her; probably too much truth in television there lol. Still, the actress who plays her is actually pretty hot.

It's probably best you don't comment on this chapter's end because it doesn't make sense until you've read CH24(which begins with Lily's PoV) ... I'm very interested in your thoughts about the Runic Array. It used all three Hallows and I hope came across as challenging rather than a simple matter of course...

Chp24